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Restorying Painful Histories: Critical Literacy, The Imagination Gap, And The Affective Lives Of Queer Educators

Abstract

A narrative inquiry project, Restorying Painful Histories foregrounds the effects of growing up in a world without self-representation in childhood. Specifically, this project attends to the aftereffects of misrepresentation and representational absence upon the imagination of queer educators. Addressing what Ebony Elizabeth Thomas describes as an “imagination gap” in adulthood, this project draws upon theories of critical literacy, queer studies, and affect studies as it invites queer educators to “restory” past experiences of queerphobia (i.e., a “painful history” of their choosing).

Occurring over the course of one academic year, an inquiry community of nine queer educators gathered monthly at an LGBT center on a private University campus in the Northeast United States to explore the question: how might storytelling support queer educators address histories of queerphobia? During sessions, participants responded—affectively, orally, and in writing—to a shared Young Adult (YA) text featuring intersectionally diverse representations of queer adolescence. Following discussions of a weekly shared reading, participants then drew upon that work as a mentor text through which to rewrite a “painful history” of their choosing in a process called “restorying.” The restorying processes included six forms of narrative change, including rewriting identity, place, mode, perspective, metanarrative, and time.

There are three primary findings from this project. First, queer individuals did indeed demonstrate an imagination gap, one that involves the active impulse to “destory” queer life. Isolating this gap revealed, however, the need to cultivate “affective reading” practices that guard against erasing queer history. Second, queer individuals are haunted by “genre ghosts,” by a realism that precludes happy endings and demands queer death. Through “critical speculative uptake,” however, queer people can brook the impulse to destory and bridge imagination gaps in adulthood. Finally, expanding criticality altogether, “reading orientations” are presented as a model for reconfiguring reader response theory to engage a wider range of forms of power. Specifically, “reparative description” reveals how power functions through the imaginative and affective aspects of queer educators’ “affective lives.” This dissertation concludes with a call for representational justice in pursuit of a queerer future.

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RESTORYING PAINFUL HISTORIES: CRITICAL LITERACY, THE
IMAGINATION GAP, AND THE AFFECTIVE LIVES OF QUEER EDUCATORS

James Joshua Coleman

A DISSERTATION

in

Education

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

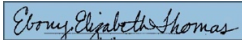
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2020

Supervisor of Dissertation

A small rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink, which reads "Ebony Elizabeth Thomas".

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Edward Brockenbrough, Associate Professor of Education

DEDICATION

To Mom,

Thank you for living a brave life, for you, for us, for community.

&

To Grandma,

For your unwavering love, of me, of family, of bacon¹.

¹ Anecdotal proof: When asked after a week of touring Paris for “one thing, one thing you’ve liked since you got here?” Without skipping a beat, she responded, “The bacon and egg sandwich I made yesterday.” You’re unparalleled, and I love you unconditionally.

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Offered in the form of Thanks and don't anybody get bent out of shape about the ordering... it's "arbitrary"

To my mentors. I'm one of the luck ones. I've been graced with unwavering support at so many points in my life. To **Mrs. McCurry**, in 10th grade, you changed me. Thank you for seeing who I was in a place that could have swallowed me whole. You were the first, and my thanks is truly beyond words. You are a gift to education. To **Prof Harshbarger** and **Dr. Weaver**, each of you guided the course of my life, from the Deep South to the world. Thank you infinitely. To **Ebony**, it is unparalleled, how you have shaped me. Your care, so deep and so wide, I will carry with me always, as I teach my way into the future. You are the mentor I dreamed of, and I am so thankful you saw something in me worth nurturing. I look forward to a lifetime of being your student, colleague, and friend. To **Amy**, you have shown me how to navigate this profession with precision and candid nurture; it's who I was as a teacher and who I hope to be as a professor. Thank you. To **Mollie**, knowledge of the grace, sincerity, and kindness that guides your research and mentorship long preceded my meeting of you; it is a model I hope one day to enliven in my own life as a professor. To **Ed**, your care comes in the form of tough, direct questions—ones that have grounded me from the beginning. Thank you for fighting for our community, unwaveringly. To **Gerald**, you've been a continual guide, and RWL couldn't be in better hands; you've molded each of us in beautifully powerful ways. To **Erin**, thank you for your unfatiguing fight for the queer community. You've been a guide in both subtle and overt ways. Please never stop.

To friends, old and new. First the old, to **Alvin**, my oldest friend whose ass I carted across the whole of Europe and who, in return, has carried me in my darkest moments (No, Alvin... I'm not referring to the blouse incident). To **Christine**, whose boundless generosity is something I aspire to every day in my own life and teaching. Also, your truly unassuming appreciate of eggplant emojis is unparalleled. Now the new, to **Adam**, I don't know how I would have done this without you; you've grounded me at every point throughout this journey and reminded me to celebrate every step, something I forget far too easily. Also, you brought the Countess Luann into my life, and as we both know "Money can't buy you class." To **Travis**, your unwavering optimism has been a boon on the darkest of days. Thank you for convincing me of the importance of the soda stream/music responsive lighting combo #lifegoals. To **Riley**... I miss the boots. Our relationship has never been the same. Truly though, I aspire to work with the same incisive kindness you demonstrate in every word and gesture. To **Martín**, your tireless work ethic (and arms of steel) are an inspiration. You make me better. To **Kennedi**, it is and will always be "just fine." To **Jenn**, **Mia**, and **Kristina**, you make this journey all the brighter, thank you.

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To those who are gone, **Ecie** I miss you, and you too **Agatha** (It's your birthday today). I know you're both with me, and if you read long enough, there's an entire chapter about ghosts. I feel you both often, giving me strength. I wish you could have been here, but then again you are.

To you, **Josh**, you did it! Be proud and be kind to yourself, something you never learned to do.

To my participants, working with you was a dream, much like this project. You made me laugh; you made me cry; and I hope that together we can realize our collective dreams, of a queer history and a queerer future.

To my community, queer folks this one is for you. I'm sorry for my failures, for they are legion; I am, like all of us, ever striving towards a queerness on the horizon. I do believe, though, that we have a bright future ahead of us, and I can't wait spend it with you.

ABSTRACT

RESTORYING PAINFUL HISTORIES: CRITICAL LITERACY, THE IMAGINATION GAP, AND THE AFFECTIVE LIVES OF QUEER EDUCATORS

James Joshua Coleman

Ebony Elizabeth Thomas

A narrative inquiry project, *Restorying Painful Histories* foregrounds the effects of growing up in a world without self-representation in childhood. Specifically, this project attends to the aftereffects of misrepresentation and representational absence upon the imagination of queer educators. Addressing what Ebony Elizabeth Thomas describes as an “imagination gap” in adulthood, this project draws upon theories of critical literacy, queer studies, and affect studies as it invites queer educators to “restory” past experiences of queerphobia (i.e., a “painful history” of their choosing).

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CHAPTER 1: REPRESENTING THE PAST: USING STORIES TO DO A QUEER HISTORY FOR TODAY

I think the struggle for a bearable life is the struggle for queers to have space to breathe. Having space to breathe, or being able to breathe freely...is an aspiration. With breath comes imagination. With breath comes possibility. If queer politics is about freedom, it might simply mean the freedom to breathe.
(Ahmed, 2010, p. 120)

I grew up in a world filled with representations, of little engines that could and lion kings and witches who served Turkish delight in wardrobes. I had access to seemingly infinite worlds, each of which offered me an experience, an escape, from my own. Adulthood has, however, revealed to me the limits of those worlds, how when layered one upon the next, they reveal particular textures and similarities, sameness: These worlds intended to shape my young imagination were, as Nancy Larrick described in 1965, “all-white,” and furthermore, all-straight, all-gender normative, and all-abled. Growing up in the Deep South, it is little surprise that the worlds to which I had access were uncompromisingly homogenous, chosen because of their pallor and, furthermore, palatability. In sharing my childhood reality, I do not, however, invite a condemnation of the South, of my family, nor of the communities that raised me, challenging though they were; I do, however, invite a vehement critique of the whiteness and, furthermore, white supremacy and cisheteronormative values that birthed me—values deeply embedded in the imagination of a child, a queer child, who is still today learning and unlearning the imagined worlds he encountered in childhood.

In contrast to my own childhood, today’s landscape of children’s literature has changed (Dahlen, 2019; Flood, 2020; Low, 2020), not in leaps and bounds, but in nudges

and stalls. The world of my childhood is gone, replaced by a more diverse *representational landscape* embedded with its own challenges both in terms of cultural authenticity (Fox & Short, 2003) and appropriation (Coleman, 2019a). While I would love to present a halcyonic vision of an infinitely diverse representational landscape in which young people boast unfettered access to a multiplicity of stories—this in stark distinction to my own childhood—that is, simply put, not the case. Young people today exist in a slipstream of the past, in echo chambers of siloed representation, and in an era defined by fake news; To assert then that these young people have unprecedented access to diverse representations heralding some utopian inclusion would be a silver-tongued fabrication—yet another specious narrative of diversity done (Ahmed, 2012). Yet things have changed. Online organizing impelled by fervent advocacy has greatly reshaped today’s publishing and educational landscapes. Movements such as #WeNeedDiverseBooks, #DisruptTexts, and #OwnVoices are demanding more diverse representation, as educators, academics, and activists together reckon with the all-white, all-straight pasts of children’s literature: Together, we are pursuing what I refer to as *representational justice*.

A guiding principle for this project, *representational justice* refers to an equity-oriented, historically based approach to the study of diverse representation in young people’s literature and media as well as their effects. Enlivened by intersectional theories of social oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; J. Puar, 2007), such an analytical framework accounts for the impact of overrepresentations, misrepresentations, and absences in diverse storytelling as it shapes the imagination of readers across the lifespan. In *The*

Dark Fantastic (2019), Ebony Elizabeth Thomas proposes the *imagination gap*—the idea that a lack of diverse images in childhood affects the development of the imagination—to advocate for more diverse representations in children’s literature and media publishing and in education. Following in Thomas’s footsteps, this dissertation similarly pursues representational justice, presenting a small sliver of what such justice might look like within my own community, the queer² community, and does so by accounting for how representational absences and misrepresentations in childhood structures the adult imagination. In the midst of my own childhood—in which whiteness was taught to feel natural on my skin—there was, for me, always a jostling, a nudge of never quite

² Queer in this paper refers to a socially deviant, nonnormative way-of-being in the world that is often interwoven with myriad social identities now operating under the sign or umbrella of “queer” identity. Holding queerness and LGBTQ* identification together, queer in this text is inclusive of but does not imply exclusive identification as a sexual or gender minority. Because of its investments in the social, my work does, however, tend to concentrate at the point of overlap—imagine a Venn diagram if you will of “queer” and “LGBTQ*,”—where nonnormative ontology meets identity. In explication of this point, please allow me this one indulgent quote, truly the longest single quote in this dissertation. Eve Sedgwick (2003) in *Touching Feeling* writes:

Queer, I’d suggest might usefully be thought of as referring in the first place to this group or an overlapping group of infants and children, those whose sense of identity is for some reason tuned most durably to the note of shame...I’d venture that queerness in this sense has, at this historical moment, some definitionally very significant overlap, though a vibrantly elastic and temporally convoluted one, with the complex of attributes today condensed as adult or adolescent “gayness.” Everyone knows that there are some lesbians and gay men who could never count as queer and other people who vibrate to the chord of queer without having much same-sex eroticism, or without routing their same-sex eroticism through the identity labels lesbian or gay. Yet many of the performative identity vernaculars that seem most recognizably ‘flushed’ (to use James’s word) with shame consciousness and shame do cluster intimately around lesbian and gay worldly spaces. (p. 63)

This is the nexus at which my work sits, and I do not police anyone’s usage of queer: any are welcome. Accordingly, there may in points be some conceptual slippage between different usages of queer within this dissertation; For this I apologize. In all cases, I have attempted to clarify how I am using the term queer in that moment, though in general it refers to a nonnormative way-of-being that does “cluster intimately around lesbian and gay worldly spaces,” and to these spaces I would add any number of other identities now housed under the so-called “queer umbrella.”

Also, as a general rule, when talking about specific communities extant within the larger queer umbrella, I will honor participants self-designation, and when quoting or referring to some text, my use of terminology will mirror the terminology deployed by that text.

belonging; I failed, without fail, the tests of masculinity set before me. I was a white queer child in an all-white, all-straight world, and no book encountered in childhood invited me to imagine otherwise: “show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become” (Adichie, 2009).

As this dissertation will assert, queerness and queer life deserve to be represented in all its multiplicitious splendor, for we do indeed contain multitudes. However, for today’s queer adults our pasts have, with few exceptions, been characterized by misrepresentation or by an absence of self-representation altogether in childhood. It is only in the 21st century and, more specifically, in the last decade that positive representations of queer life have flowed through mainstream media, streaming services, and even schools, connecting queer individuals in unprecedented ways. Representation and stories have provided means to imagine a richly diverse community that stretches across space and time, and central to that imagined community (Benedict Anderson, 1983) is the role of queer history. Crystalizing throughout this dissertation project, questions about queer history have provided orienting devices for the more specific research conducted through narrative inquiry methodology; these include: How might a communal queer history accrue? Can stories knit themselves together around present absences, partial archives (Blount, 2005), as well as both representational and lived violences to forge a communal history? And how can queer history, from its inception in k-12 contexts, be attuned to the multiplicitious nature of queer intersectional existence (Hames-García, 2011)?

For this project, representational justice guides the pursuit of a multiplicitious queer history that foregrounds the discordance of history itself. Histories are full of narrative frictions, of tensions born of the interweaving of diverse life stories that can, in moments, seemingly contradict. This is certainly true of personal narratives of queer life and the newly codified LGBT history curriculum crafted for US school contexts: Illinois recently became the fourth state to mandate LGBT history (not queer history) be taught in public schools (Leins, 2019). While teaching about queer life certainly opens avenues towards representational justice, the curricula and pedagogy arising from such mandates are not, however, without concern; such historizing fossilizes figures of the past within fixed identitarian frameworks, likely unused by those individuals. Consequently, such fossilization denied the capacity for less recognizable desires, longings, and ways-of-being to exist in excess of the legible, limited framing of appliqué identities. Narratives, however, provide a means to queer fixed histories, teasing apart time and again the woven tapestry of queer life—and who better to do this work, than queer educators.

Purveyors of knowledge, queer educators occupy a powerful locus from which to shepherd the future of queer history. Both figures within and potential guardians of that history, who else can draw upon lived experiences to test the mettle and merit of representing the queer past³? To guard the past is, however, tricky work that demands

³ To position queer individuals as “guardians” is admittedly an aspirational move. It is one that hopes, though with no surety, that queer folks’ engagement with the integration of queer history in K-12 schools might mitigate the potential harms of specious misrepresentation. Such a statement does not, however, mean to erase the crucial work of ally’s in today’s shifting representational landscape—individuals who in some instances might have more assured access to queer young people. Furthermore, this statement does not mean to erase the potentials of more commonly represented—and thus generally more legible, palatable, and validated —forms of queer life to subsume or enact hermeneutic, epistemic, or other forms

recognition of how pasts fold into the present and how queer representation is changing. In the 21st century, with rare exception, the queer imagination is no longer forming around Nancy Larrick's "all-white," all-straight, all-cis, all able-bodied world, and such change splits the queer imaginary, troubling easy pathways for cross-generational learning. Thin or missing (Coleman, 2018), queer generations exist within fundamentally different representational landscapes, and the queerness of the past, indelibly marked by shame and stigma (Love, 2007; Sedgwick, 1990, 2003), threatens to be swept away in today's tidal wave of queer pride—even in name this movement divorces itself from negative affects long held as constitutive features of queer life. While certainly a challenge to forming queer history, these shifts in queer generational experiences also hum with untapped potentials, for learning histories together, across-generations, young from old as equally as old from young. Accordingly, positioned as the guardians of queer history, educators must also consider how that history will incorporate queernesses of the present; we must learn from generational differences in queer imaginaries, finding in transformation over time inroads for repairing damages of the past, while also refusing to forget histories that hurt.

Doing a Queer History for Today

Taking up this work, *Restorying Painful Histories* invited queer educators between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-eight, perhaps a single generation, to *feel backward* (Love, 2007) by narrativizing painful experiences of queerphobia. Following

of injustice or violence upon those who live under the sign queer. Ultimately this work will need to be conducted in coalition, bridging lines of difference both within and external to the queer community.

an initial account of a so-called *painful history*, participants were then invited to reimagine those histories, drawing upon representations of contemporary queerness—intersectionally diverse representations in queer young adult (YA) literature—as mentor texts for *restorying* (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016) their pasts. Together, my participants and I began to uncover the contours of our imaginations, both gaps and pathways forged by growing up with misrepresentation and without self-representation in childhood, and by comparing painful experiences of the past with representations of present-day queerness, we began to re-feel history. Harnessing narrative, we then began to reshape our relationships to the pain of negative affects, both our own and our communities, as we interwove our own stories—whether factual accounts or imaginative fictions—into an ever-expanding, historical narrative of our multiplicitious community.

Such continual acts of storying and restorying are a vital component of what this dissertation proposes as “doing of queer history for today”—a theory that the historicizing of queer life should occur through ongoing practices of storytelling couched in a post-positivist realist ethic of change (Mohanty, 2000; Wilkerson, 2000). Applying Satya Mohanty’s theory of post-positive realism to queer epistemologies, William Wilkerson (2000) explains that reality is constituted in the present through ongoing interpretations and reinterpretations of experience; for example, upon recognizing one’s queerness, past feelings of attraction become newly legible, perhaps as desires articulating themselves towards bodies previously imagined as being beyond one’s erotic reach. A post-positivist realist ethic then spotlights the fallibility of queer historical narratives; it recognizes that the “real” of yesterday might be found fallible today, and

thus any queer history must remain open to being rewritten, to being redone in light of the queerness of today. Terms render experience legible, and for the queer community, terms rapidly proliferate. They accrue new meanings, values, and affects that render the past visible “retroactively, such that previous elements of experience cohere together in new, meaningful patterns” (p. 253). For instance, Jack Halberstam in the introduction to *Trans** (2018), explains, “If I had known the term ‘transgender’ when I was a teenager in the 1970s, I’m sure I would have grabbed hold of it like a life jacket on rough seas, but there were no such words in my world” (p. 1). Words do not define us, but they do render us legible, both to ourselves and to others, and we must be prepared for the queerness of today to fail to encapsulate the queerness of tomorrow or, for that matter, of yesterday. Queer history is thus something that must be done, undone, and redone; it is an ongoing narrative weaving, a doing both powerful and necessary, that may only hold for today.

This orientation grounds my theory of “doing a queer history for today,” one that recognizes in storytelling a means to recraft national and world histories to incorporate queer life, while also attending to the damages of queer histories already formed.⁴ To do a queer history for today, then, demands an openness to reinterpretations of experience, to listening to those stories of queer life that have been marginalized to greater extents within US social worlds. It is, also, to remain open to and actively recraft history as we

⁴ Though rare, when it has surfaced, queer history has almost invariably been shaped around whiteness, both subtly and overtly. Illustrative, the 2015 film *Stonewall* was notoriously panned for whitewashing the catalytic actions of trans women of color, by wrapping the narrative around the fictional heroism of a white, cisgender character (Segal, 2015). While the historical originator of the stonewall riots remains unknown (Faderman, 2019), the persistence of whiteness within queer history remains a consistent reality in educational research and mainstream publishing. For more on whiteness in educational research see chapters 2 and in Young Adult (YA) publishing see chapter 4.

learn and hear more stories. Knitting stories together, of fiction and fact, past and present, this dissertation reveals specific ways in which queer history impacts the adult imagination, while also providing a framework for shepherding future queer histories into educational spaces as it attends to representational landscapes both past in present. With that in mind, I want to make a first contribution to doing queer history within this dissertation. Here is my painful history, a single story woven into the narrative tapestry that is but a piece of today's queer history.

My Painful History

“YOU’RE A FUCKING FAGGOT, YOU’RE A FUCKING FAGGOT, YOU’RE A FUCKING FAGGOT.” The words filled my classroom. They filled me. It was my first-year teaching—a White, Southern gay man teaching 10th grade special needs English in Charlotte, NC. My students were predominantly of color, and frankly, I was ill-prepared to be leading that classroom. I lacked pedagogical expertise, training in multicultural approaches to education, and most importantly, the affective preparedness necessary to bare the emotional labor of educating from a place of self-authenticity. Though I had been “out” for nearly half a decade at this point, I was counseled upon arrival at my school to leave sexuality out of the classroom. Though I didn’t understand it at the time, this counsel was provided with love and care, and I wasn’t the only one to receive it. Notoriously, North Carolina provided no work place protection for queer individuals, and in 2016, the state positioned itself as blatantly inimical to queer educators.

Situated within this context, being named 3 times a faggot by my student, pierced the delicate classroom culture that I, at best, tenuously maintained. Interpellated in this

way, I became in that moment newly textualized, my queerness made legible through a sematic frame expressly forbid in those U.S. classrooms: I was a queer man queered.

In that moment, my classroom transformed into a landscape of potential volatility. Affect hummed, poised for emotional expression in laughter, anger, or even rage. I now recall in that moment an extreme internal quiet; I had mentally retreated into my mind/body/consciousness. I was in shock, disconnected from the environment beyond my body's trembling frame. In that expanding moment, there existed great potential. My students, eerily calm, felt that volatility too: how would I react? Would I yell? Would I cry? Would I run out of the room? They knew and sensed the breach. That student's words were an attack intended to wound, to cause pain through vulnerability; it forced me to be seen, made me visible in an educational context that forbids queer educators like me from being and teaching at the same time.

Years later, I no longer hold a grudge against him, that student; I am not hurt or mad or even judge him for the low-hanging fruit that was an attack on my sexuality. I am however angry at a nation that renders me and my community vulnerable on the basis of that sexuality. This is the painful history I carry; it is the reason I am pursuing a PhD; and it is what motivates me to pursue restorying as means to rewrite painful histories of the past—to explore if, by recomposing them, we might usher in a more charged political present as well as a more hopeful, queer future.

Narrativized, this experience is enmeshed in my personal history, even as it exists within that the larger tapestry of queer history. Painful, the affect of this story remains within me; it is infused within my imagination, a texture and pathway that shapes my

responses in the present and for the future (Lennon, 2015). Many queer educators carry such stories. We are not, however, prostrate before them. We can restory such painful histories even as we rewrite the imagination gaps formed in childhood. Finding agency in narrative, we might speculate towards future queer histories, writing them into exists in way that begin to shift representational landscapes for future generations, both in the material world and in the imagination. To do so, however, we must first understand how misrepresentations and absences in childhood affect the queer imagination in adulthood (i.e., form an imagination gap), what impact encountering positives representation of queer youth in adulthood has upon the imagination, and finally, how storying—and specifically “restorying”—allows us to reshape the representational landscapes of our imagination. This dissertation, therefore, pursues the following research questions:

1. What do queer educators’ responses (e.g., oral, written, and affective) to queer young adult literature reveal about the imagination gap in queer educators?
 - a. What role does queer history play in these responses?
2. Does restorying as both a process and literacy practice bridge the imagination gap in queer educators?
 - a. How can genre be used to address gaps in the imagination?
 - b. What are the critical implications of framing restorying as a form of repair?

Importantly, these questions have not been stagnant inquiries but have shifted to meet the inquiries of my participants, the community with whom I shared space and story and feeling. Most overtly, each of the subquestions was generated from the on-going

conversations taking place during our restorying sessions. While the design of this project was always focused on personal histories, the emphasis on communal queer history was born *in situ*, from the process itself; likewise, foci on genre and repair bloomed from our conversations and concerns as we wove together or collaborative narrative of queer life.

Roadmapping A Queer History for Today

For this dissertation, chapters 1-3 provides macro-level context for the more specific arguments advanced in the three findings chapters 4-6. The final chapter, chapter 7, summarizes findings for the entire project and provides recommendations for educational research broadly as well as for critical literacy and teacher education specifically. Chapter 2 details the conceptual framework of the *Restorying Painful Histories* project. It begins with a literature review of monographs about queer educators from 1969 forward. Limited in scope, this literature reveals, nonetheless, a shift in focus from research *about* white gays and lesbian to narratives *by* LGBTQ+ educators from various racial, ethnic, and regional backgrounds. This chapter then advances the theoretical framework of the dissertation—one steeped in queer theory, affect studies, and critical literacy—by defining key concepts, such as *feeling backward* (Love, 2007), the *imagination gap* (Thomas, 2019), and *restorying* (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016). In chapter three, I then explain the narrative inquiry research design, including context, participant selection, and curriculum development as well as researcher positionality and data collection, management, and analysis.

The first of three findings chapter, chapter 4 address “doing of queer history for today” by illuminating how the imagination gap operates through *destorying*. Operating

across scales, destorying invites queer individuals to forget or unimagine certain queer existences. While it might seem that, as multiplicitious queer representation increase in the 21st century, destorying will subside; this chapter reveals, however, how it merely functions anew. Ingrained in the habits of queer adults, destroying furthers our impulse to forget those queers who, as Heather Love (2007) describes, are “the most vulnerable, the least presentable, and all the dead” (p. 30). Such is the hallmark of homonationalist times. Fear, however, can be an affective guide towards representational justice. Reading such affective responses—what I refer to as *affective reading*—can spark oscillations between interpretative frameworks that render unimagined queer life visible. Combatting the impetus to forget (i.e., to destory), fear and other negative affects provide a vital means of reshaping the imagination, as they reveal to us the contours of our imagined worlds as well as those whom we allow to exist within it.

Chapter 5 extends chapter 4’s exploration of queer history and the imagination gap by inviting queer people to convene with *genre ghosts*. Specifically, this chapter addresses the trope of unhappy endings and queer death in realist representations of queer life. As participants illustrate, imaging and then composing happy endings often slips beyond conscious possibility when reading and writing in realist genres. To combat this phenomenon, this chapter proposes the notion of *genre ghosts* as a conceptual tool for tracing the impact of history upon contemporary composing practices. It then delineates how participants drew upon these ghosts through a process of *realist* and *speculative critical uptakes* to *restory* their painful histories. This chapter reveals that moving happiness outside of heterosexual norms creates space for unhappy queer endings that

can be satisfying for queer readers and writers. Additionally, this chapter positions Carlos as an illustrative case revealing the restorying process's potential to encourage *critical speculative uptake* towards more just representational futures.

In chapter 6, the final findings chapter, I argue that critical literacy studies needs to adopt counter-critical approaches to reading research and thereby expand the naturalized understandings of “critical” upon which the field rests. We need, what I call, *reading orientations* that move critical reading practices beyond “skeptical critique.” Doing so, I contend, will reveal alternative forms of power currently unseen in critical literacy research. This chapter foregrounds “reparative description” as one such reading orientation, one by which participants altered their relationships to their painful histories and, so too, to the critical force of the imagination gap upon their lives. Importantly, while restorying did not remove the pain of queerphobia in any participants lives, it did, however, alter all participants’ relationship to that pain, providing as one participant explained “control in a way that nothing else has” (Helen, POSTI20190501). Powerful, to alter one’s relationship to pain provides a powerful mechanism for supporting queer educators who continue to inhabit imagined classrooms worlds as well as other imagined educational systems structured around the imagination gap. Finally, this chapter concludes by spotlight a *communal circle of testimony and witnessing* as a key component to the restorying process.

The final chapter, chapter 7 recapitulates in detail the finds from chapters 4 through 6, ultimately synthesizing them into the story of this dissertation. I then provide five primary recommendations for educational scholarship. These recommendations

advocate 1) caring about and prioritizing queer studies scholarship, 2) exploring further the role that the imagination gap plays in both queer and non-queer educators' lives, 3) developing processes within teacher educator for learning the contours of one's imagination and its critical implications, 4) incorporating representational justice and alternative genealogies of affect into critical literacy scholarship, and 5) creating space for educators to share their painful histories in communal circles of testimony and witness. I then conclude my dissertation by consigning it to the dark (Steedman, 1987), in essence naming it as a work for queer educators that, furthermore, is an attempt at doing a queer history for today.

CHAPTER 2: STORYING QUEER EDUCATOR HISTORY: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Attending to the specific histories of homophobic exclusion and violence—as well as their effects—can help us see structures of inequality in the present... I insist on the importance of clinging to ruined identities and to histories of injury. Resisting the call of gay normalization means refusing to write off the most vulnerable, the least presentable, and all the dead.
(Love, 2007, p. 30)

With recognition comes acceptance, with acceptance comes power, with power comes regulation.
(Halberstam, 2018, p. 18)

Broad in scope, this conceptual framework is composed of two components, a literature review and theoretical framework, both of which operate as macro-level contexts for the three findings chapters that follow. While each findings chapter contains its own tailored conceptual framework, this chapter provides connective tissue and necessary background for large-scale conversations regarding the pursuit of representational justice for queer educators. Accordingly, my review of literature begins by detailing the role of storytelling in research about queer educators; it then shifts to describing a series of theoretical apparatus derived from queer theory, critical literacy, and affect studies that I deployed in the design, implementation, and write-up of the *Restorying Painful Histories* project.

Review of Literature

The stories of queer educators have originated from numerous locals, from oral traditions and written works, from bodily movement and dramatic performance, and from a limited though growing body of educational research. This review of literature synthesizes educational research about queer educators, cohering together their stories

into a research history that accounts for evolutions in representation and narration over thirty years of scholarship (from the 1990s-present day). Introducing my own review, I first share findings from Sara Kavanagh's (2016) *From Contagious to Resilient and Beyond: A Periodization of Four Decades of Education Research on LGBTQ Issues* to provide necessary context for my own review of literature. While Kavanagh's piece details the earliest scholarship on queer educators, from the 1960s-80s, my own review of literature will concentrate on scholarly monographs dating from the last decade of the 20th century to today (2020).

60s, 70s, and 80s

Beginning in 1969, the year of the Stonewall Riots, Kavanagh isolates five paradigmatic frames through which educational scholarship has conceptualized LGBTQ issues and educators, with the earliest frames providing a decidedly pathological appraisal of queer educators. The first frame (Pre-1970: Homosexuality as a Social Contagion) demonstrates how early educational research on queer educators evaluated the viability of lesbian and gay teachers through psychological consideration. Sadly, this research served a pathologizing function that reinforced notions of lesbians and gay men as physically ill—as contagions⁵—and thus as infectious to America's youth. The second historical frame (1970 Onward: Homosexuality as a Private Identity) shows a shift in scholarship concomitant with the mounting gay rights movements of 70s and 80s; research at this time shifted from pathological frameworks to focus concertedly on queer educators' legal rights and public responsibilities. No longer a disease, "homosexuality"

⁵ The notion of queer educators as social contagions and psychologically ill occurred four years prior to the 1973 removal of homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III) and prevailed throughout the 60s and into the 70s to be challenged by advances in sexological research and the gay rights movement.

transitioned in scholarship at this time from an illness to be managed to an identity to be evaluated. A victory for mainstream gay rights, this identity was, however, newly inscribed in power; it was relegated to the private sphere and thus separated from classroom worlds as a singular question took the stage of educational scholarship about queer educators: should sexual orientation *remain* adequate grounds for discharging schoolteachers (Eckes & McCarthy, 2008)?

90s and Beyond

Scholarship of the last three decades has, however, proven both more abundant and more affirming, advancing nuanced research projects conceived of and conducted by queer educators, as opposed to merely being about them. For the purposes of this literature review, I detail two primary shifts in educational research about queer educators, both of which are revealed through and attunement to storytelling: these are 1) shifts in representations and 2) shifts in narration. While easily overlooked, shifts in literary form and narration speak to evolutions in the methodological approaches to researching queer educators, and book length projects in particular, by virtue of their length and flexibility, provide a useful prism for tracing these transitions over time; such monographs and collections on, about, and by queer educators reveal early historical narratives about the community, while also gesturing toward those narratives' critical implications.

Representing White Gay and Lesbian Histories. One of the earliest book length works on queer educators, Dan Woog's (1995) *School's Out: The Impact of Gay and Lesbian Issues on America's Schools* draws together gay and lesbian teachers' stories from across the nation. A journalist, Woog in his work organizes those stories into three categories (e.g., person, place, and programs) and, in doing so, compiles a national "story

of gay and lesbian issues in America's schools" (p. 15). Karen Harbeck in 1997 published what is likely the first academic monograph on queer educators. Her work, *Gay and Lesbian Educators: Personal Freedoms, Public Constraints*, draws upon document analysis and field research to level a sustained critique of the legalistic frameworks surrounding gay and lesbian educators. Sanlo (1999), building on her dissertation data, published another of the earliest academic monographs, which was compiled of interview data from sixteen white gays and lesbians living in northeast Florida. Her work crafts a regional narrative of gay and lesbian teachers, foregrounding the specific challenges of educating in a notably fraught location for queer professions. To that point, educational historian Karen Graves (2009), writing a decade later about the same region, uses thorough historical research to construct a historical narrative of the Johns Committee—a Florida based purging of gay and lesbian teachers from K-12 and university classrooms during the lavender scare. A final monograph concentrating specifically on gays and lesbians, Jackson's (2007) *Unmasking Identities: An Exploration of the Lives of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* interweaves interview and working group data from nine white K-12 teachers to propose a model of gay teacher identity development (e.g., *gay teacher identity development process*).

Spanning the late 20th century and early 21st century, all aforementioned book length works espouse a similar limitation: they focus almost exclusively on the experiences of white gays and lesbians and operate from an underlying gay liberationist narrative⁶ (Brockenbrough, 2012). By no means a condemnation, this research has vitally

⁶ Gay liberationist narrative, per Ed Brockenbrough (2012), refers to the "declarative act of coming out and the concurrent and/or subsequent connection to a visible gay community enable the closeted gay subject to emerge from a space/time of relative powerlessness, affirm his gay identity, and become better equipped to advocate for anti-homophobic change" (p. 744).

pushed the field to consider queer issues long absent from educational scholarship; these works raise, however, a critical question in relation to research on queer educators: *What does it mean for the historical narrative of queer educators to be constructed, almost exclusively, around the experiences of white gays and lesbians?* Though each of the aforementioned authors addresses the limitations of their projects, naming multiple barriers for incorporating increasingly diverse perspectives (e.g., failures in participant sampling, fractured archives, etc.), taken together, these works demonstrate a history of queer educators that is, undeniably, homogenous and fallible.

Representing Queer Intersectional Histories. Shifting from white gay and lesbian perspectives, Kissen's (1996) sociological research in *The Last Closet: The Lives of Lesbian and Gay Teachers* and Blount's (2005) historical monograph *Fit to Teach: Same-sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the Twentieth Century* both serve as powerful examples of how educational scholarship might adopt more expansive frameworks for studying queerness. Published contemporarily with Harbeck and Woog's works, Kissen's *The Last Closet* foregrounds intersectional frameworks, doing so, interestingly enough, while being the only monograph reviewed whose author identifies, not as LGBTQ, but as an ally. From the introduction, Kissen names her privilege stating, "as a heterosexual college professor, I knew that I could not presume to speak for lesbian and gay teachers. Instead, I wanted to use my relative privilege to give them the opportunity to speak in safety and to tell their stories to people who might otherwise never hear them" (p. 3). While Kissen's tone might be critiqued for its savioristic tenor, I find in her overt foregrounding of privilege and in her fine-grained analysis of lesbian, gay, and bisexual educators' stories an attunement to intersectional dynamics of race,

class, region, and ability that call into question the liberationist attitudes characterizing the aforementioned book length works about and by white gay and lesbian educators.

Similarly, Blount (2005) in *Fit to Teach* expands frameworks for queer studies in educational scholarship. Her work, a 20th century educational history of same-sex desire and gender variant individuals, exposes how white privilege in historical scholarship often renders invisible the experiences of persons of color within historical records; describing the difficulty of constructing her archive, she writes, “Making matters even more complicated, much of the historical primary source material concerning same-sex desire ignores persons of color” (p. 9). Written nearly a decade after *The Last Closet*, Blount shares Kissen’s commitment to intersectional perspective and goes one step further questioning liberationist attitudes by extending her historical account of gender and sexuality in schools beyond identity frameworks. While acknowledging gay and lesbian experiences, *Fit to Teach* expands its purview of research to engage more nebulous articulations of gender and sexuality; As she explains, her history of queer educators traces same-sex desire and “unconventional” gender—not identities—within 20th century schoolwork. Taken together, Kissen and Blount represent a powerful shift in the narrativization of queer educators within the historical record: specifically, their employ of intersectional perspectives and research frameworks that extend beyond identity categories and liberationist attitudes tied to white gay and lesbian life.

Self-Narrating Queer Life. In complement to these more traditional academic monographs, 21st century research on queer educators has ushered in important narratological shifts, with researchers no longer operating as the sole narrators of queer educator experiences and histories. Instead, contemporary research has begun to

foreground queer educators' voices, creating space for them to tell their own stories in the form of edited collections of personal narratives (one notably outlier for this is the Woog's (1995) *School's Out*). For example, sj miller and Nelson M. Rodriguez's (2016) collection of queer memoirs, *Educators Queering Academia*, drew together leading voices in the field of education to represent the "diverse lineages and intersectionalities" of queer educators in the academy (p. xv). Foregrounding what they refer to as "critical memoir," their collection mobilized storytelling as a form of critical praxis intended to disrupt queer oppression across the academy. Helmed by a trans individual and man of color, this work demonstrates the importance of research *about* queer educators to be conducted *by* queer educators, as well as the necessity for all research to draw upon intersectional frameworks that expand beyond the white gay and lesbian historical narratives of the late 20th century.

Heeding this call, DeJean and Sapp's (2017) collection, *Dear Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgender Teacher: Letters of Advice to Help You Find Your Way*, imparts queer educator knowledge across generations by taking account of the past and present. To form their collection, DeJean and Sapp solicited letters from a diverse range of queer educators who hailed from various racial, ethnic, and national backgrounds as well as professional positions, including teachers, administrators, and counselors. Important, this work provides a platform for cross-generational learning such that queer educator knowledge might span generations, while also striving towards a multiplicitious narrative of queer educator life. A final collection, Mikulec and Miller's (2017) *Queering Classrooms: Personal Narratives and Educational Practices to Support LGBTQ Youth in Schools* braids together queer educators' and allies' stories to promote the well-being of

LGBTQ youth. Linking story with practice, *Queering Classrooms* provides any educator with strategies for support queer individuals in schools. Taken together, these volumes synthesized myriad experiences across literary forms that ranged from critical memoirs, to letters of advice, to personal narratives and, in doing so, provided queer educators with means to share untold stories and thus contribute to a more diverse, intergenerational history of queer educators.

Rewriting Past Histories. While unique in their own right, each of these scholarly collections is indebted, at least in part, to Kevin Jennings's (1994, 2005, 2015) popular press series *One Teacher in Ten*—likely the first published, book length work on queer educator experiences. Jennings, the founder of the first GSA⁷ and GLSEN⁸, began collecting queer educators' stories in the early 1990s and has subsequently published a new collection each decade. These collections have traced the evolution of being a queer educator in US contexts and have spotlighted the often-painful histories that adhere to queer bodies, both in the past and presently. In his latest edition, published in 2014, Jennings shows an increased attunement to stories from queer people of color, gender variant individuals, and international perspectives. While my attention to Jennings's work is not intended to reify the centering of white gay and lesbian histories, what it does intend is to call for future educational scholarship about queer educators to be intimately attune to history's fallibility, to its capacity to homogenize and erase; and thus to the need for any historical narrative to be open to being rewritten. Furthermore, future scholarship

⁷ Gay Straight Alliance

⁸ Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network

must continue to recognize the pains of the past—those felt yet often unheard stories, for which queer educator research has yet to account.

Theoretical Framework

Feeling Backward to Painful Histories

In *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, Heather Love (2007) advances *feeling backwards* as an affective disposition necessary for the construction of an equity-oriented queer history. As she explains, to feel backward is to maintain a “disposition towards the past,” one that invites queers to “cling[] to ruined identities and to histories of injury” (p. 30). A challenge to liberationist politics firm roots in the present, Love argues for increased attention to histories of negative affect, to stories saturated with shame, loss, and stigma, that reveal a community constituted—at least in part—through pain. Bound together through stigma and shame (Halperin & Traub, 2009; Sedgwick, 2003), through trauma and tribulation (Cvetkovich, 2003), and through the lasting legacy of the closet (Sedgwick, 1990), an ethical queer history, for Love, is one that must account for histories that hurt and, in so doing, might guide the politics of a community undergoing rapid representational change. As she explains,

Attending to the specific histories of homophobic exclusion and violence—as well as their effects—can help us see structures of inequality in the present... I insist on the importance of clinging to ruined identities and to histories of injury. Resisting the call of gay normalization means refusing to write off the most vulnerable, the least presentable, and all the dead.

(p. 30)

Sadly, modern advances in LGBT rights beseeches us to leave behind the very histories that, at least for the origins of queer history, were constitutive of queer community; they ask us to forget the past in pursuit of what Love refers to as “gay normalization.”

Referred to elsewhere as “homonormativity” (Duggan, 2002; Stryker, 2008), “gay

normalization” indicates the process by which white, cisgender, able-bodied, and affluent gays and lesbians have become the *sine qua non* of queerness itself. Affording privileged access to the normative pathways of life, such normalization operates in counter distinction to queer theory, and it does so at the expense of “the most vulnerable, the least presentable, and all the dead” (p. 30). Thus, to resist gay normalization is to resist an invitation to forget the past and, by extension, those for whom recognition, access, and justice have yet to be attained; Furthermore, to exhume legacies of shame, depression, loss, and stigma is to spotlight the racism, sexism, transphobia, and ableism that persist in contemporary queer life.

While the 21st century has been hallmarked by the rapid expansion of queer rights and representation, the threat of continued oversight of queer theory’s investments in whiteness and cisnormativity looms large. Vital to such oversight is the invitation to forget, to erasure, whether intentionally or not, those *painful histories* that continue to hurt in the present. A central concept to this project, *painful histories* are one pathway for feeling backwards; they are stories of queerphobia that have shaped one’s lifeworld over time. These are personal stories, ones of loss, familial rejection, intimate violence, or public shame born of queerness, and furthermore, these are stories that continue to engender pain in the present. It is, however, precisely because of such pain that these stories provide powerful in-roads for critical engagement. As Sara Ahmed (2014) explains “stories of pain involve complex relations of power” (p. 22), for pain is a “contingent” and felt experience that reveals to us the echoes of negative affect cleanly nestled within the imagination (p.28). For queer people, histories of shame, guilt, and anger cling to or “stick” to representation (p. 4), to images of real-world objects, people,

places, pasts we house within the imagination, and when summoned, they reveal the attachments that engender our pain in the present: “So what attaches us, what *connects* us to this place or that place, to this other or that other...it is that which makes us feel” (p. 28)

Pain then is an invitation, an affective trigger that teaches us about ourselves and our histories and about the power of pain to animate present politics. Accordingly, the invitation to forget our painful histories, to “move past them” in pursuit of a more pride filled present, is an invitation to realize a present divorced from history, one that remains uniquely open to exclusionary politics already interwoven within the queer community. This dissertation project, while refusing to police boundaries of who or what falls under the sign queer, does nonetheless align itself with a particularly queer politics, one that recognizes and challenges intra-group privileging made visible by various conceptual prisms: these include gay normalization (De Lauretis, 1991), (new) homonormativity (Duggan, 2002; Stryker, 2008), homonationalism (2007), queer of color critique (Ferguson, 2004), and decolonial queer theory (Pereira, 2019). As each of these concepts reveals different aspects of power and privilege operating in queer life, their use throughout this dissertation is dependent upon the context, content, and argument of a given chapter; however, all of them provide in-roads for achieving similar goals: Using *painful histories* to support an equity-based politics for queer educators, one that attends to both extra- and intra-group dynamics of power and privilege.

The Affective Life of the Imagination

Wide ranging, educational research on teaching and emotion have addressed a number of topics, including emotional intelligence (Kaur et al., 2019), teacher emotion

(Fried et al., 2015) and emotional exhaustion (Näring et al., 2012). While adopting a number of varied approaches and perspectives, this work draws almost exclusively upon psychological paradigms that neglect the sociocultural valences of life and living. Recognizing this gap, this project draws upon the conceptual affordances of the *affective turn* (2010) to study how affect is intertwined with social life as well as how that intertwining is intimately bound up with power. Importantly, theories rage around definitions of affect, with each theory shaping considerations of both affects impact and its import. In literacy studies, as within most fields, Brian Massumi's⁹ (1995, 2002) work has operated as the uncontested origin of affect theory. To recognize Massumi's work as such is, however, to forgo alternative affect studies, genealogies that are most often rooted in queer, queer of color, and intersectional feminist ways of thinking.

Accordingly, this dissertation takes up an unconventional genealogy of affect, one born of poststructuralist feminist paradigms that recognize two important distinctions relevant to this dissertation study: 1) definitions of affect and 2) the connection of affect to social life. Firstly, drawing upon the works of queer (Cvetkovich, 2003; Love, 2007; Sedgwick, 2003), queer of color (Ahmed, 2014; Combahee River Collective, 1986; Lorde, 2001) and intersectional feminist scholarship (Hemmings, 2012; Leys, 2017; Ngai, 2005; Probyn, 1993; Wetherell, 2012) that recognizes affect as an inclusive terms

⁹ Theories of affect boast several genealogies (Leys, 2017; Wetherell, 2012). For the affective turn, the leading genealogy stems from Brian Massumi's "Autonomy of Affect" and subsequent works, in which affect is defined based on the works of Baruch Spinoza as the "capacity to affect and be affected." This theory of affect studies non-rational and non-representational investments that drive contemporary politics. As pre-conscious intensities (1995), affect within this paradigm knits together the body and the social in novel configurations that cleanly sever affect from emotion, consciousness, and discourse. Poststructuralists challenge the psychological principles upon which Massumi grounds his theories and, furthermore, assert that a clean divide between affect and emotion, consciousness, and discourse is not possible. Accordingly, these genealogies directly contradict one another, with Massumi's approach tending to dominate in more contemporary, anti-foundationalist forms of scholarship.

referring at once to any of the following: affect, emotion, feeling, and/or sensation. This position stands in sharp distinction to prevailing theories of affect premised on a clean division between affect and emotion, with emotion belonging to the realm of the social while affect remains an asocial, preconscious phenomena (Berlant, 2011; Massumi, 2002). Accordingly, this dissertation's adoption of a marginalized (in multiple senses) genealogy of affect is then an extension of my work's critical orientation, and by doing so, I might acknowledge the utility of Massumi's work, conceptually, while also recognizing its critical shortcomings for social science research (i.e., its limitations in attending to those experiences of marginalization born of the social world)

Specifically, this dissertation draws upon Sianne Ngai's (2005) model of the relationship between affect and emotion. She writes, "the difference between affect and emotion is taken as a modal difference of intensity or degree, rather than a formal difference of quality or kind" (p. 27). For her, affect and emotion are interrelated, a modal continuum that allows for movement between affect and emotion, "whereby affects acquire the semantic density and narrative complexity of emotions, and emotions conversely denature into affects" (p. 27). Eschewing the formal distinction between affect and emotion central to Massumi's claim, Ngai's model provides this dissertation a similar analytic continuum, rendering multiple forms of negative affect visible—both those neatly understood as socially legible emotions and those that exceed narration all together. Embedded in stories, pain then serves as a locus for the application of said analytical continuum throughout this dissertation, opening in-roads to "feeling backwards" through stories and into imaginations and lives rich with affect.

This point raises another concept vital to this project, what geographer Ben Anderson calls *affective life* (2014). For Anderson, “learning to attend to the vagaries of affective life, the techniques and sensibilities that compose human geography and the types of politics that animate the discipline” opens affect to a pragmatic and critical approach (Ben Anderson, 2014; Nichols & Coleman, 2020; Wetherell, 2012). Applied to queer educators, such a perspective reveals how various affects shape and organize bodies, for instance, queer educators leaving the teaching profession because of mistrust, anger, and shame (i.e., queerphobia experiences in schools). While affective life provides a powerful analytic for engaging material geographies, this project focuses less on the movement and organization of bodies (a future avenue for research on queer educators explored in chapter 7) and more on the role the imagination plays in constituting one facet of affective life, for queer educators. In defining imagination, Philosopher Kathleen Lennon (2015) following Kant, describes it as the “domain of images” within consciousness (p. 2); it is a space in which “our experiences take the form of images, and images offered as representations can reorder the way in which we experience the world” (p. 4). Guiding this dissertation, this conception of the imagination foregrounds, on one hand, that the imagination orders our experiences through images; it “is that by which there is a world for us” (p. 2), a representational landscape that shapes our felt experiences of the world. On the other hand, Lennon’s work reveals to us that the imagination is malleable—that it can indeed be “reorder[ed]”—remade in pursuit of more just representational landscapes that might reshape our felt relationships to difference and diversity.

In a world of shifting truths, of fake news and alternative facts, the imagination is a space where images cohere into narrative, where representation is spun into story, and where, as Ebony Elizabeth Thomas (2016) boldly asserts, “Stories *still* matter.” Building upon the foundational work of Kathy Short (Fox & Short, 2003; Short, 2012), Thomas calls attention to the effect that an absence of diverse stories has upon the imagination of children and adults. As she explains in *The Dark Fantastic* (2019),

When youth grow up without seeing diverse images in the mirrors, windows, and doors of children’s and young adult literature, they are confined to single stories about the world around them and, ultimately, the development of their imaginations is affected.

(p. 6)

Shaped around “stereotyping, caricature, and marginalization,” the childhood imagination mirrors the representational landscape of life, twining its way around images both present and absent to form stories that, ultimately, create gaps in our capacities to imagine—what Thomas refers to as an *imagination gap* in adulthood (Thomas, 2016, 2019). Such gaps are central to this dissertation project, and while I recognize that deficitized perspective undergird any form of gap language, I also recognize in the usage of the term, a subversive potential to critique, not those seemingly defined by gaps, but the social worlds that formed them in the first place. Therefore, to define someone as experiencing an imagination gap reveals more about the values of a society and whose lives have historically been worthy of representation, than of those individuals living within it. With this in mind, I want to assert clearly that not only can queer people imagine but that we imagine wildly; however, within dominant social frameworks within the US we have been taught, to the point of habit, to unimagine queer futures, queer life, and queer opportunity (for more on this, see chapter 4). However, as stated, the imagination is a

malleable thing, and story, as Kathy Short (2012) suggests, provides a powerful, speculative tool for (re)creating “our views of the world and the lenses through which we construct meaning about ourselves and others” (p. 9). For this project, restorying is that means.

Restorying Critical Literacy

As proposed by Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016), *restorying* is a rearticulated form of reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1988, 1995), whereby individuals who have traditionally existed on the margins of representation read and write themselves into existence, often via the tools and technologies of today’s digital world. Coupling Critical Race Theory (CRT)—particularly theories of counter-storytelling (Bell, 1987, 1992, 1996; Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Williams, 1978)—with fan studies scholarship, this rearticulated conception of restorying extends narrative research traditions in two ways: 1) by attending to the shifting forms of textuality that hallmark today’s digital world and 2) by foregrounding the social justice potentials of counter-storytelling. Traditionally, restorying has referred exclusively to “break[ing] stories down into their constituent parts—plot, characters, themes—and then synthesiz[ing] them in new ways to make meaning of myriad experiences of the same phenomenon” (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016, p. 318). Thomas and Stornaiuolo’s theory of restorying builds on this work, reconceptualizing it as a form of literacy practice whereby individuals “analyz[e] their lived experiences and then synthesiz[e] and recontextualize[e] a multiplicity of stories in order to form new narratives” (p. 318). Restorying, in this formulation, thus functions as a narrative tool for individuals both young and old to “write themselves into stories that have heretofore marginalized, silenced, and excluded them” (p. 317), and

Thomas and Stornaiuolo provide six forms by which individuals might harness narrative to reshape the *representational landscape* of their mind, ones that have too often been all-white, all-straight, all-cis, and altogether exclusionary. The six forms include identity, place, mode, perspective, metanarrative, and time. (See Figure 2.1 for a visualization of the six forms of restorying along with a method for enacting or composing each one. The form is noted on the outer ring of the story and the inner ring presents a method or means of composing that form)



Figure 2.1. Forms of Restorying

While Thomas and Stornaiuolo have detailed myriad ways in which young people are drawing upon their lived experiences to re-write tired narratives in today's digital age (Stornaiuolo & Thomas, 2017, 2018; Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2019), their work has yet to consider how adults too might learn from today's digital landscape, specifically from the work of young people's restorying efforts. This dissertation accordingly explores how adults might rewrite their own representational landscapes, by learning from writing both for and by young people. As Julia Kristeva (1995) asserts, adolescence literature is an

“open psychic space” into which adults pour their anxieties, and as such, said literature and other attendant narratives provides a powerful locus for adults to learn the contours of their own imagination and to bridge gaps born of inequitable representations. To teach restorying as a process, then, this dissertation turns to Young Adult (YA) literature as mentor texts through which adults might revisit past representational landscapes and grow more aware of how the imagination *affects* our lives in the present. We can understand how the representations we hold as images woven into stories within the imagination structure our affective responses. The imagination is a locus of power that shapes every interaction within our classroom worlds, and there are facets of those worlds, particularly around diversity and difference in connection to ourselves and others, that we must “reorder.” We must, quite literally, restory the imagination.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The imagination is a tricky thing to study; its existence within consciousness as well as its simultaneously individual and collective nature form challenges in rendering the contours of the imagination knowable, researchable. Story, however, reveals the imagination at work. It shows how the worlds we craft in our minds draw upon rich histories and life experiences—legacies of life—that become woven into our ways of thinking, feeling, and knowing and, furthermore, these worlds reveal themselves in the stories we tell. The narrativization of experience provides a locus for studying the imagination, both that which appears readily within consciousness and that which reveals itself only through absence (i.e., the imagination gap). Accordingly, this project draws upon narrative inquiry research design and methodology (Clandinin, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) to research a particular phenomenon—the impact of the imagination gap upon the literacy practices of queer educators. Specifically, *Restorying Painful Histories* focuses on the restorying practices of an inquiry community of nine queer educators as those practices evolved over the course of the 2018-2019 academic year. Following a discussion of the general research design, in this chapter, I detail the context and participants (including my own positionality), the project curriculum and implementation, as well as data collection, management, and analysis; All of this is done to demonstrate restorying's capacity to address the painful histories educators hold in the imagination.

Using Narrative Inquiry to Research Phenomena: Community, Context, and Collaborative Ethics

Rising to prominence in social science research in the late 20th century, *narrative inquiry* is, as Clandinin (2007) points out, an “old practice.” Newly enrobed in methodological trappings, however, narrative inquiry now provides social scientists with a structure for sustained inquiry into stories that shape our imagined worlds; it reveals “ways we create meaning in our lives as well as ways we enlist other’s help in building our lives and community” (p. 44). Stories are the connective threads that weave individuals together into *imagined communities* (Benedict Anderson, 1983), and thus acts of storytelling, counter-storytelling, and restorying can reveal shared imagined histories, ones rooted in pain or in pleasure that traverse time. Accepting Heather Love’s (2007) invitation to *feel backward*, this project followed Connelly & Clandinin’s (1990) assertion that “narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the pattern of inquiry for its study” (p. 2). Working on two levels, narrative inquiry thus refers, on the one hand, to “a way of thinking about experience” that renders story as data to be studied and, on the other hand, to a methodology that provides “a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study” (i.e., it focalizes research that reveals meaning unique to narrative structures, such as sequencing, narration, and tropes, to name but a few (Clandinin, 2007, p. 479)). Utilizing both aspects of narrative inquiry methodology, the *Restorying Histories Project* convened an inquiry community of queer educators to explore how painful histories of queerphobic experience shape literacy practices and the role restorying can play in altering our relationship to that pain.

Inquiry community

Steeped in Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle's (2009) conception of "knowledge-of-practice," inquiry communities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, 1999; Fiorentini & Crecci, 2015; Waff, 2009) are groups in which individuals systematically study their own practice. Driven by inquiry, participants do not merely construct but generate knowledge by inquiring into their own data. As data for this project exists primarily in the form of stories, it would be misleading to claim this is a practitioner inquiry project, though many parallels do exist. As participants' inquiries centered on personal narratives, not their practices of teaching, a narrative inquiry research design proved more appropriate in designing the study, which centered around the following participant-facing question: how might storytelling support queer educators address histories of queerphobia? While, as stated, this was a narrative inquiry project, in the remainder of this section, I demonstrate how three tenets of practitioner inquiry—inquiry orientation, privileging the local, and problematizing as outcome—informed the *Restorying Painful History* narrative inquiry research design to guide the inquiry community of queer educators.

Inquiry orientation. Lyons and LaBoskey (2002) describing narrative inquiry explain, "As inquiry, narrative involved an intentional reflective process, the actions of a group of learners interrogating their learning, constructing and telling the story of its meaning, and predicting how this knowledge might be used in the future" (p. 2-3). Utilizing such a theory of inquiry, this project positioned an inquiry stance as pivotal for engaging in the self-reflexive process of restorying and as a corner stone to this inquiry community. This was presented in the introductory meeting and in my facilitations of

restorying sessions. For instance, I entered each session with a “session protocol” of questions that addressed the following: 1) the restorying focus of that week, 2) the experience of the restorying process in terms of reading and composing, and 3) the experience of the restorying process in terms of feeling. Modeling this practice, participants, over time, adopted an inquiry stance to both their own and others stories, cultivating “a worldview, a habit of mind, a dynamic and fluid way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice” and in the world of storytelling (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 113).

Privileging the local. Recognizing the decolonizing impulse of this project, it was constructed to return epistemic privilege (Campano, 2007; Mohanty, 2000) to queer educators, by following another hallmark of practitioner inquiry—the privileging of local knowledge production. Equally embedded in narrative inquiry, Clandinin & Huber (2010) engage the local by advocating for attention to “particular” quotidian experiences; they assert that the “knowledge generated by narrative inquiries is textured by particularity and incompleteness” (p. 14): essentially, one’s lifeworlds and accrued experiences texturize the stories we tell (Rounsaville, 2017). Accordingly, narrative inquiry like practitioner inquiry embraces standpoint particularity, doing so by situating local knowledge and the telling of stories within a given temporal, social, and material context—what Clandinin (2007) refers to as the *metaphoric narrative inquiry space*. Reaching across time and space, narrative inquiry “studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters: they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places” (Clandinin, 2007, p. 54). Enlivening this connection to particularity and the local,

Restorying Painful Histories participants were invited to choose the queerphobic story they wanted to inquire into over the course of the project. Thus they engaged the past by writing and sharing personal histories, while also writing or “doing” a queer of today.

Problematizing as Outcome. A final component of this project’s inquiry community was a fundamental understanding—discussed at both the introductory session and throughout the project—that sharing and questioning was never intended to foreclose future inquiry, and indeed it did not. Instead, as this dissertation demonstrates (see the implications section in chapter 7), our inquiries generated “questions rather than answers, multiple possibilities rather than sure solutions, diverging perspectives rather than particular viewpoints” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 114). Adopting an inquiry stance towards our narratives allowed us to follow the “wondering, tentativeness, and alternative views” advocated by narrative inquiry (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 20) such that we could dwell “in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people’s lives, both individual and social” (D. J. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). As an inquiry community, participants in this study actively eschewed ready-made answers, embracing instead relational *in situ* storytelling as a framework for reimagining and restorying the past, both their queerphobic experiences and queer history itself.

Context

Taking place during the 2018-2019 academic year, recruitment for the inquiry community began in August of 2018. Employing *purposeful, criterion-based selection methods* (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), I solicited participants through two primary mechanism (flyers and word of mouth) and four primary communication channels.

- 1) Through the LGBT organization, RainbowEd (pseudonym), at the local Graduate School of Education (GSE) (I had been a board member for three years);
- 2) Through city-wide newsletters distributed through the local chapter of the National Writing Project;
- 3) Through newsletters, on-campus advertising, and word of mouth connections associated with the campus' LGBT center and GSE;
- 4) Through snowball or chain sampling (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) whereby one participant invited others to join the study.

Joining the study was limit to a single criterion: participants must self-designate as a “queer educator.”¹⁰ Participant recruitment took place during the August and September months of 2018, concluding with an information session on October 4th, 2018. During this session, prospective participants were provided with a “Restorying One Pager” detailing the logistics and ethical considerations of the project, a consent form, a copy of IRB approval, and a copy of the “Restorying Curriculum” (discussed below). This session and all subsequent sessions took place at a Northeastern private university's LGBT Center in order to promote a sense of safety and because of its proximity to the Graduate School of Education, where most participants were enrolled.

¹⁰ Noting the particularity of the selection criteria, it becomes vital to the project to explain what is meant by “queer” and “educator,” particularly as both of these terms have slippery, context-dependent meanings. For the context of this project, both terms are intentionally capacious, affording wide interpretation; inclusion within the community of practice is based solely on self-recognition as a “queer educator.” Recognizing the myriad and often contradictory definitions that circulate around queerness, it becomes incumbent upon me to name that neither same-sex attraction nor gender variance operate as a prerequisite to participation in this inquiry community. Furthermore, while this study is situated primarily within education literature for and about K-12 teaching, the criterion for “educator” in this work is also intentionally capacious and thus welcomes any queer individual who views their domain of practice as educating.

Through these recruitment efforts, nine participants joined the *Restorying Painful Histories* project and boasted a wide array of racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds as well as differing relationships to ability and to gender. Notably, two participants joined the group who were not local community; Coyote and Carlos attended interviews and sessions via digital telecommunication programs (e.g., skype, Facetime, etc.), and Carlos travelled from a different large Northeastern city to join our group for the final celebration session. The demographic breakdown of participants was as follows in Table 3.1:

28	Age	Sexual Orientation	Gender	Race	Ethnicity	SES	Nationality	Ability	Religious/ Spiritual Identity	Teaching
Helen	24	Lesbian	Woman	white	No response	Upper Class	American	Neurodivergent able-bodied	Atheist (Still Spiritual)	Sex educator (public) Peer Educator (college)
Adam	26	Gay	Male	white	white	Middle Class	American	able bodied	None	School Psychologist (1 year)
Claire	23	queer	GNC queer	white	Jewish White	Working lowing ¹¹ class	N/A	mental disability able bodied-ish	Jewish	Preschool (6 years) Middle (3 years) High (1 year)
Ari	23	queer	non-binary trans	white	American French white	Middle Class	American French	Chronic pain ¹²	Wiccan	Community organizer; higher ed diversity officer
Kim	23	Queer bisexual	woman	Undecided ¹³	Chicana	Working-class	American	able bodied	Catholic background, presently agnostic	Teaching Assistant for Higher Ed
Carlos	28	gay	male	Mixed	Mestizo	Upper Middle Class	Mexican-American	able bodied	non-affiliated	Lower Elementary Ed (5 years)
Josh	28	Queer gay	Male GNC	white	Caucasian	Middle Class	American	Neurodivergent able bodied	not; Spiritual	High school (3 years)

¹¹ “Lowing class” was this individuals self-description; One can safely assume that “lower class” would be synonymous.

¹² “Because it's invisible and not super like formally medically recognized I don't feel as valid claiming that identity.”

¹³ “Do not identify under American conceptions of race as a mexican-american woman”

										Higher ed (4 years)
Coyote	28	queer	Agender	White	Jewish	Middle Cass	American	Disabled	Non	High School (4 years) Higher ed (1 year)
Margarita	23	Gay Pansexual queer	gender questioning non-binary	not sure; descendant of indigenous and white	Latinx mestiza	Poor Low- income	Mexican- American	non visibly disabled	Very Spiritual	Pre-school (2 years) K-12 English educator (1 year; India)

Table 3.1 Participant Demographics

Espousing a wide array of cultural difference, participants presented myriad intersectional identifications that served to push queer studies scholarship in literacy studies and educational research broadly. While I refrain from enumerating various combinations of queer social identities in this methods chapter—largely to avoid its tokenizing effect outside of specific contexts—as various intersections become salient to the study’s findings, I reference them in relation to the prevalent whiteness of aforementioned queer studies scholarship in education (see chapter 2 for more on this). For their participation, participants received remunerations in the form of a \$25 visa gift card for each of two interviews as well as dinner provided at each inquiry community session.

Curriculum Development and Execution

Recognizing the paucity of empirical research that uses restorying *a priori* within research design, I developed a “Restorying Painful Histories Curriculum” (Table 3.2)

FIGURE 1 Forms of restorying



based around reading and writing tasks to structure participants engagement with all six forms of restorying—identity, place, mode, perspective, metanarrative, and time. With seven different session from which data was collected (one for each of the six forms of restorying and a final celebration day), participants were expected to do two

tasks for each session: 1) read a shared YA text that demonstrated the focal form of restorying for that day and 2) compose a (re)story to share with fellow participants based

on the previous weeks focal form of restorying. Generally, per participants preference, the first half of each session was spent responding to our shared reading, and the second half was spent sharing and responding to each other's' (re)stories. At the conclusions of each session, I explained how our shared reading served as a mentor text for participants to use when restorying their *painful history* for next week's session. For instance, in our first session, the "restorying identity session," we read and discussed Gabby Rivera's (2017) comic book, "American Vol. 1: The life and times of America Chavez," and for our next session, participants restoried their painful history or originary story¹⁴ based upon Rivera's work. As previously mentioned, a tentative restorying curriculum was constructed prior to the introductory meeting; however, alterations to that curriculum were made throughout the project, particularly as I came to know my participants and understand which forms of restorying would prove more challenging to them (e.g., mode and metanarrative). The final version of the curriculum looked as follows:

¹⁴ Originary story is a term I used to refer to the story itself, to the narrative which proceeds acts of restorying. While painful histories refer specifically to the negative, affect-laden stories upon which this dissertation focuses, originary stories refer more broadly to the anchoring stories one might then reimagine into (re)stories. This delineation I believe reveals the process of speculative adaptation that, for me, is the hallmark of restorying, as opposed to other forms of storytelling and counter-storytelling.

	Introductory Session	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Topic:	Research Project & Consent	Identity	Time	Mode
Text		<i>America Vol 1: The Live and Times of America Chavez</i> by Gabby Rivera	<i>All Out: The No Longer Secret Stories of Queer Youth</i> . Sandra Mitchell (“El Bajío” McLemore)	<i>Miseducation of Cameron Post</i> (film)
Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome (food) - Introduction - Project Description - Project Expectations - Questions - For Next Time 	Welcome (food) Responding to <i>America, Vol 1</i> StorySharing: Painful History For Next Time	Welcome (food) Responding to: <i>All Out</i> (Excerpts) StorySharing: Identity Restory For Next Time	Welcome (food) Responding to: <i>Miseducation of Cameron Post</i> . StorySharing: Time Restory For Next Time
Restory at Home.	Painful History (Originary Story): Choose a painful history or story you wish to work with throughout the semester. Compose/write that story in some format that is shareable (public sharing will be optional). Read: <i>America Vol 1: The Live and Times of America Chavez</i> By Gabby Rivera (PDF)	Restorying Identity: Restory some aspect of identity in your painful history using Storyboardthat.com. Think about how this alters the structure of your story. What changes will you need to the overall narrative by virtue of your changes. Please make sure it is shareable. Read: <i>All Out: The No Longer Secret Stories of Queer Youth</i> . Sandra Mitchell (“El Bajío” McLemore)	Restorying Mode: Restory the time associated with your painful history using canva.com. How might your narrative alter were it placed into a different time? Please feel free to compose it via any print or digital means you would like. Please make sure it is shareable with researcher. Watch: <i>Miseducation of Cameron Post</i>	Restorying Metanarrative: Restory the mode of your painful history. Essentially, if your work is in prose switch it to a visual text or a digital story. The goal is to reimagine your story in a form that incorporates different modes of communication (e.g., oral, visual, kinesthetic, verbal, etc.) Read: <i>Love is Love (Excerpts)</i>

Table 3.2. Restorying Curriculum

	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6	Session 7
Topic:	Metanarrative	Perspective	Place	Final
Text	Love is Love (Excerpts)	The Letter Q (Excerpts)	AU FanFiction	
Agenda	Welcome Responding to <i>Love is Love</i> . StorySharing: Mode Restory For Next Time	Welcome Responding to Restories: The Letter Q (Excerpts) StorySharing: Metanarrative Restory For Next Time	Welcome Responding to Restories: “Forever and Always by your side” StorySharing: Perspective Restory For Next Time	Welcome StorySharing: Place Restory Celebration, Thanks, and wrap-up
Restory at Home.	<p>Restorying: Restory your painful history to address the metanarrative or dominant story of Love is Love. Feel free to use any format you would like. Please make sure it is shareable</p> <p>Read: <i>The Letter Q</i> (Excerpts)</p>	<p>Restorying: Restory the Perspective associated with your Painful History. How might your narrative alter were told from a different perspective? Please feel free to compose it via any print or digital means you would like. Please make sure it is shareable with researcher.</p> <p>Read: Read the Intro, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 (all very short) to “Forever and Always by your side,” which is set in an AU or Alternative Universe in which Arthur and Merlin from the show <i>Merlin</i> fall in love... But in this universe soulmates share pain.</p>	<p>Restorying: Restory the place associated with your Painful History. How might your narrative alter were it placed into a different environment? Please feel free to compose it via any print or digital means you would like. Please make sure it is shareable with researcher.</p>	

Table 3.2. Restorying Curriculum

Collaborative Ethics

As a participant observer (Emerson et al., 2011) in this study, I employ Hemmings's (2012) theory of *affective solidarity* to guide the collaborative *ethics of incommensurability* (Tuck & Yang, 2012) I adopted as a community insider, facilitator, researcher, and participant. A form of feminist reflexivity, *affective solidarity* thinks feminist standpoint theory and affect theory together to assert a "broader range of affects—rage, frustration, and the desire for connection—as necessary for a sustainable feminist politics of transformation" (p. 148), yet it does so without rooting "these in identity or other group characteristics." Recognizing "queer educators" as the criteria for joining, the potential to project feelings or my own conceptions of queerness onto my fellow community members or onto the data looms large and threatens viability. A White, Southern, cisgender gay man who resonates with queerness, I sought to make visible my affective responses—the good, the bad, and the ugly—through the systematic production of *researcher generated data* (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Within twenty-four hours of each session, I generated *data collection memos* and *critical incident memos* that charted my affective responses to group discussions, with each memo addressing moments of high affective intensity, most specifically around considerations of queerness and race. While memos addressed many other valences of social identification, queerness and race were chosen as mainstays of my memoing process because of the focus/design of the study around the queer community and because of race's categorization as the "master category" of American social formations (Omi & Winant, 2015). Recognizing, furthermore, the realities of intragroup difference among my participants, I reflexively interrogated my whiteness in sessions, ushering my

perceptions and fears of it into discussion and found that the naming of whiteness opened conversation to an interrogation of hegemonic reading practices among BIPOC and white participants alike (for more on this see chapter 4).

Such an approach, revealed Tuck and Yang's (2012) ethics of incommensurability at work as it spotlighted moments of *affective dissonance*—the feeling generated from “a lack of fit between our own sense of being and the world's judgements upon us” (p. 149). Opening both collaborative, discussion-based spaces and individually reflexive spaces to considerations of queerness's racialization animated the collaborative ethics in this projects; For me the researcher, recognizing that the critical goals I held for my project would likely prove incommensurate with those of my participants' equally as critical goals, attuned me to moments of affective dissonance—when my interpretations of a text or moment did not align with another participants. This reflexive process, rooted in a keen attention to my own feeling, impressed upon me the importance of a guiding axiom for my research: difference is always present, even in moments that seemingly feel the same (Sedgwick, 1990). Recognizing in incommensurability a framework for collaborative ethics, my work was and remains open to *member checks* by any participant at any time (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Both in the introductory session and celebratory sessions, participants were told that they might see and discuss my findings at any time. No participant has yet to take up this offer.

A Date with Data: Collection, Management, and Analysis

Data Collection and Management

Based upon the Table 3.3. Data Chart below, in this section, I first describe each of the four forms of data, in terms of both collection and management and then provide

the data collection schedule (Table 3.4), along with references codes used as citations throughout the findings chapters. Finally, I delineate the analytical methods for each findings chapter separately.

Chapter	Research Questions	Data Sources	Analytic Method
4	What do queer educators' responses (e.g., oral, written, and affective) to queer young adult literature reveal about the imagination gap in queer educators? What role does queer history play in these responses?	Pre-Session Interviews Session Transcripts Post-Session Interviews Researcher Memos	First Cycle Coding: Open Coding, Emotion/Affect Coding Second Cycle Coding
5	Does restorying as both a process and literacy practice bridge the imagination gap in queer educators? How can genre be used to address gaps in the imagination?	Pre-Session Interviews Story Artifacts Session Transcripts Post-Session Interviews Researcher Memos	First Cycle Coding: Open Coding, Emotion/Affect Coding Second Cycle Coding Critical Multimodal Content Analysis
6	In what ways does repair reveal restorying's critical implications?	Pre-Session Interviews Session Transcripts Post-Session Interviews Researcher Memos	First Cycle Coding: Open Coding, Emotion/Affect Coding Second Cycle Coding Reparative/Descriptive Analysis

Table 3.3. Data Chart

Pre- and Post-Session Interviews. Taking into account Ravitch & Carl's (2016) eight considerations for developing and conducting interviews—these being relational, contextual, nonevaluative, person centered, temporal, partial, subjective, and nonneutral factors—I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each participant; one took place prior to the restorying sessions (pre-interviews) and one after (post-interviews); each was based upon preconstructed interview protocols (Appendix A). Questions for these interviews were aligned to the study's research questions and particular attention was paid to what Patton (2015) describes as feeling questions—"questions [that] explore what people feel and their emotional experiences" (p. 444-445). These interviews were conducted in a private location agreed upon between interviewer and interviewee, occurring most often at the Graduate School of Education of a local Northeastern private university or online. All data was audio recorded using the Memo App on my Iphone. Data was then downloaded to my laptop and placed into a password protected file to be housed on an external hard drive. These data were subsequently erased from the recording device and sent for transcription through Rev.com.

Story Artifacts. Story artifacts refers to all data associated with storytelling, sharing, and composing throughout the course of the project. Each session involved a "story share" time in which participants deliver their originary stories (i.e., painful histories) and their restories to the group. From this, story data was generated in two primary forms: 1) as discourse shared within the session (this was captured in session recordings and transcripts as described below), and 2) as digital or print stories. In line with the restorying curriculum, participants shared a copy of each week's (re)stories with

me. These (re)stories were organized in two forms, by participant and by restorying form, and were catalogued on the researcher's laptop under password protection.

Session Transcripts. Due to scheduling challenges, all sessions with the exceptions of the “Introductory sessions,” “restorying place session” and “celebration session,” were doubled for a total of thirteen sessions. All sessions beyond the introductory session were video and audio recorded and transcribed. However, due to confidentiality/anonymity concerns, no video stills were used in the dissertation. All group sessions took place in the University of Pennsylvania's LGBT Center in a closed room, and all video and audio data were downloaded to my laptop and placed into a password protected file to be housed on an external hard drive. These data were subsequently erased from the recording devices and sent for transcription through Rev.com.

Research Memos. Recognizing that “paying close and systematic attention to [research positionality] is important to maintain fidelity to exploring and trying to understand the complexity of people's experience” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 115), as previously described I generated *data collection memos* and *critical incident memos* systematically. Following each face-to face session, I wrote data collection memos for a total of twenty memos.

Interview	Key	Date	Code
Carlos	PreI1	10/14/2018	PREI20181014

Sarah	PreI2	10/15/2018	PREI20181015
Helen	PreI3	10/16/2018	PREI20181016
Margarita	PreI4	10/18/2018	PREI20181018
Adam	PreI5	10/23/2018	PREI20181023
Kim	PreI6	10/24/2018	PREI20181024
Ari	PreI7	11/01/2018	PREI20181101
Coyote	PreI8	11/06/2018	PREI20181106
S1a.Identity	S1a	11/01/2018	S1A20181101
S1b.Identity	S1b	11/02/2018	S1B20181102
S2a.Time	S2a	12/02/2018	S2A20181101
S2b.Time	S2b	12/03/2018	S2B20181203
S3a.Mode	S3a	1/22/2019	S3A20190122
S3b.Mode	S3b	1/24/2019	S3B20190124
S4a.Metanarrative	S4a	2/28/2019	S4A20190228
S4b.Metanarrative	S4b	2/25/2019	S4B20190225
S5a.Perspective	S5a	3/25/2019	S5A20190325
S5b.Perspective	S5b	3/26/2019	S5B20190326
S6.Place	S6	4/9/2019	S620190409
S7. Celebration	S7	4/25/2019	S720190425
Post.Carlos	PostI1	4/30/2019	PSTI20190430
Post.Sarah	PostI2	4/30/2019	PSTI20190430

Post.Helen	PostI3	5/1/2019	PSTI20190501
Post.Margarita	PostI4	5/2/2019	PSTI20190502
Post.Adam	PostI5	5/1/2019	PSTI20190501
Post.Kim	PostI6	4/30/2019	PSTI20190430
Post.Ari	PostI7	4/30/2019	PSTI20190430
Post.Coyote	PostI8	5/6/2019	PSTI20190506

Table 3.4. Data Collection with Reference Codes

Data Analysis

While I used different forms of analysis for each chapter, at the base, all three used the same coding structures drawn from Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña's (2014) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. Accordingly, the first description of coding was used for all three chapters and was the only analytical structure for Chapter 4. Additional coding structures for chapters 5 and 6 are described below.

Coding. Described as a method of data condensation, according to Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014), coding involves the retrieval, organization, and preparation of the most meaningful data into readily analyzable units for “deep reflection about and, thus, deep analysis and interpretation of the data’s meaning” (p. 72). As my first method of data analysis, all coding took place in *Nvivo*—a qualitative research software. I read data in an ongoing, iterative fashion based upon Rev.com transcriptions, and all

transcriptions were verified by me, by listening to them in their entirety during which I corrected mistranscriptions.

First and Second Cycle Coding. Following Saldaña's (2013) model, coding occurred in two major stages: *First Cycle* and *Second Cycle Coding*. During the First Cycle, I employed *open coding* (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) to summarize segments of data and determine "what stands out" in my first read of the data. In my second read, I deployed a form of *emotion coding*—what I refer to as *affect coding* that took into account both emotional and affective data. As described by Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014), emotion coding is a method that "labels the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant or inferred by the researcher about the participant" (p. 75). I expanded this form of coding to include named or perceived affect and will refer to this as *affect coding*. Additionally, as described within *Qualitative Data Analysis* (Miles et al., 2014), when a participant explicitly names an emotion or affect, I used that term as a form of *In Vivo* code. From this first cycles of coding, I generated a total of 308 codes (See Appendix B).

In second cycle coding, first cycle codes are organized into patterns or "inferential codes... that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation" by grouping them into a more meaningful unit of analysis called *pattern codes* (p. 86). Adopting this approach, in Second Cycle Coding I organized my pattern codes according to themes, in alignment with number one of the "four, often interrelated summarizers": 1) categories or themes, 2) Causes/explanations, 3) Relationships among people, and 4) Theoretical constructs (p. 87). Once the First Cycle codes had been patterned in this way, forming

twenty-two themes, I then engaged in *narrative description* whereby I transformed those summarizers into narrative. In alignment with the narrative inquiry framework of this study, transforming codes back into story “enable[s] the researcher to outline the plots of human action and how participants (or “characters”) changed throughout the course of the study” (p. 91). Thinking specifically of this project’s focus on restorying and affect, the use of narrative description allows for a consideration of time and scale that align with the narrative inquiry research design, the data collected, and the research questions.

Critical Multimodal Content Analysis. Chapter 5 focuses on shifts in participants’ composing practices across the span of the *Restorying Painful Histories* project, specifically as evinced in story artifacts. As story artifacts often involved multiple modalities (e.g., visual, verbal, and auditory modes) generated based on mentor texts of young people’s literature, analyzing them necessitated a form of multimodal analysis that could illuminate how participant’s restorying processes and the restories themselves were influenced by encountering the representational landscape of queer YA literature over time. Accordingly, I wove together Johnson, Mathis, and Short (2017; 2019) *critical content analysis* with Kress’s (2010) *Multimodality* to analyze the restories themselves, paying particularly attention to multimodal features of those stories as they related to power.

As I was interested in the development of participants’ restorying process over the course of the project, I developed multimodal content transcripts (see Appendix C) to analyze critical elements of the restories themselves as well as participants post-interview perceptions of their compositions. Transcripts were generated for each restory submitted,

with particular attention paid to visual elements (i.e., color, layout, line, sequencing, etc.) and verbal elements (i.e., dialogue, prose, poetics, etc.) of the restories. In some instances, like Claire and Helen's playlist restories, sonic or auditory elements were also considered; these elements were not, however, discussed in the findings of this dissertation. Subsequent to the first and second cycle coding structures described above, I read each participant's painful histories and multimodal content transcripts chronologically, holding them in a constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with established pattern codes so that I might theorize change to participants restorying process over time. While this analytical approach is not wholly novel, the integration of these two forms of analysis into a *critical multimodal content analysis*—as I refer to it—uniquely emphasizes the relation between compositional processes and the imagination. Namely, it foregrounds how mentor texts can reshape the adult imagination, bridging the imagination gap through the development of composing processes rooted in speculation that draw upon diverse representations for hermeneutical resources necessary to imagine and composing otherwise. Thus, deploying critical multimodal content analysis revealed the speculative elements of participants' restorying process as they developed over time.

Reparative/Descriptive Analysis. Chapter 6 engages a critique of the primary moods and methods that have shaped “critical” analytical engagement with texts. Experimental, this form of analysis draws upon queer, feminist, and affect studies to propose a systematic approach to “reparative description” (see chapter 6 for further explanation of the theoretical underpinnings of this approach). To engage in a reparative/descriptive analysis necessitated the recognition of moments of repair in

participant’s restorying practices. Specifically, I systematically accounted for moments in which readers described their engagement with an object (e.g., YA text, originary story, restory, etc.) as eliciting positive or reparative affective responses. Accordingly, to make sense of this subject/object relation, I reorganized the data to reveal which textual objects readers were transacting within in their discursive description of repair and, further, what affirmative or reparative affects surfaced through those transactions. To do so, as demonstrated in Table 3.5 (for the full table, see Appendix D), I created three primary columns. In the first labeled “Description of Repair,” I listed sixty-seven quotes, all instances of reparative descriptions. I then returned to the transcripts themselves and, based upon contextual discussion, determined the object which participants were describing—what they were imagining—as they uttered their description. I then created conceptual categories or themes for those objects (e.g., “painful history,” “social progress”): these objects appear in column two. In the final column, I listed one primary, reparative affect that arose from that transaction between reader and object and, when possible, used an *in vivo* approach that attended as closely to their own descriptive language as possible.

	DESCRIPTION OF REPAIR	OBJECT	AFFECT
1	an acceptance of that, this happened	Painful History	Acceptance
2	If you think about it and you actually learn from it, then you can go on and actually do things.	Painful History	Motivation
3	Use it as motivation	Painful History	Motivation
4	that was kind of a good...like kind of giving me hope	Social Progress	Hope

Table 3.5. Reparative Description Data Chart

Coupled with traditional analytical coding, this reparative/descriptive analysis provided an experimental means of organizing and analyzing data to advocate for more expansive conceptions of criticality in literacy scholarship.

Conclusion

Interwoven with my conceptual framework, the methodology section of this dissertation reveals the mechanisms by which I enlivened my critical, narrative inquiry project, *Restorying Painful Histories*. In the subsequent three chapters, I reveal findings from this project, with each chapter housing its own conceptual framework. These chapters are intended to speak to one another, while also standing on their own, and each is anchored to the methodology presented in this chapter in terms of overall research design and in the specified data collection, management, and analysis processes.

CHAPTER 4: DESTORYING QUEERNESS: ON FORGETTING AND FEAR IN HOMONATIONALIST TIMES

Thinking about the imagination in a subversive way, not seeing it as a pure, uncorrupted terrain, we can ask ourselves under what conditions and in what ways can the imagination be decolonized.
(hooks, 1991, p. 55)

You gotta imagine it first right?
(Margarita, S2B20191203)

U.S. education stands at a crossroads concerning the representation of queer people within the national imaginary. 50 years after the stonewall riots, queer history has at last become mandated material within certain US state curricula¹⁵ (Vecellio, 2012), and narratives long lost to ephemeral archives are being woven into the story of a nation. However, revisioning history in this way poses great concern as it codifies queer subjectivity on a national scale, inscribing which forms of queer life should exist within the imagination. While the inclusion of queer representation must increase across educational venues, scholars already note issues regarding the inclusion of queer identity within K-12 curricula (Kokozos, 2017); drawing exclusively upon contemporary understanding of LGBTQ+ identification, these curricular texts regularly ignore long-standing debates regarding queer historiography and thus forge a sanitized queer

¹⁵ To date, four US states have mandated the inclusion of LGBT history within social science curriculum, including in chronological order from date of mandate California, Colorado, New Jersey, and Illinois (Leins, 2019). Notably in six states (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas), so-called “no promo homo” laws exist that, in most direct reference to sexual education curriculum, prevents the “promotion of homosexuality” (GLSEN, 2020). These laws often reach beyond the confines of sex ed being widely applied to curricula and school programming.

personhood within the national imagination. Such representation, while on the one hand long overdue, on the other establishes a “normal” queer subject whose inclusions derives from a singular history, one both sanctioned and crafted by the state. Constructed, culled, and collated, these histories endanger the very future of queerness: For can queerness—that thing “out-of-joint” (Edelman, 2011), that shameful and stigmatized thing (Love, 2007; Sedgwick, 2003), that thing both queering and disorienting (Ahmed, 2006)—ever be incorporated into a fixed historical narrative? As queer existence continues to gain prominence on the national stage, questions of representation of queer history in educational curricula represent a pivotal juncture for queer people; unprecedented, such representation threatens the inscription of a normal queer citizenry within the national imaginary, one whose regulatory force will undoubtedly shape queer life for decades to come.

For a community long expurgated from state institutions—education being not least of these—to see oneself represented in history is an acknowledgement of existence long overdue. Unparalleled, representations of queerness—specifically those attached to LGBTQ+ identity—are rapidly proliferating; they are manifesting in classroom history books, curricular materials, and literature for young people, and all seemingly offer a wholesale promise of inclusion. In this moment, stories long consigned to the margins of interpretation are at last amplified, raised into consciousness and into the individual imagination of US students. However, such stories and their attendant queer representation circulate with little guidance, and teachers—whether queer-friendly or queerphobic—are being asked to instruct on materials and life histories that may never

have existed, even as a figment, within their imaginations. Nevertheless, educators of varying political commitments and intentions are now teaching queer history, wielding representational and curricular materials intended to render queer experience legible to a nation. Untrained and ill-prepared, these curricular materials and their instructors are fixing queerness in time and space, rendering difference narrowly recognizable such that queer peoples and their capital (Pennell, 2016) might become incorporable into the national body: At last, we are included.

Inclusion serves, however, a secondary function as it reframes queerness within an extremely narrow band of sanctioned practices, of sartorial choices, affectations, sexual practices, and stylized acts of gender unlikely to offend and, more importantly, unlikely to contravene fastidiously held notions of the so-called “all American”—that virile futurity of the Red, White, and Blue. Queer inclusive materials forge a contemporary understanding of a “good” national subject, perpetuated through representations that present only the most palatable aspects of queer life. In his dissertation *The Illusion of Inclusion* (2017), Michael Kokozos deftly reveals the means by which contemporary circularization upholds normative models of U.S. citizenry for queer people. It is, as he explains, a *homonormative project*, one that foregrounds certain forms of queer existence while simultaneously unimagining those queers who fail to be appropriately “American”. Furthermore, he goes on to explain that this project is propelled through textbooks and other curricular resources that retroactively locate queerness in time and space; they reach into the past classifying individuals as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, or queer—identificatory terms they likely would not have

used themselves—in order to render historical figures legible to contemporary readers. Powerful, such work is also a form of representational regimentation, for it is selective and normalizing, weaving only certain narratives into the historical fabric of a nation. Today's classroom materials featuring historical queer inclusions represent only those actions, inventions, and ways-of-living that align with the foundational American mythos—that idealized “American dream” of exceptionalism and success (J. Puar, 2007): these queer stories alone might be incorporated into the story of the nation, and the rest, quite frankly, can fuck off!

In the moment of queer history's introduction into U.S. classrooms, the isolation of a homonationist curricular project gestures toward the need for even the nascent story of queer history to be retold; it must be restoried. By expanding the narratives we live by on-goingly, we can push the very boundaries of the imagination and thus create space for more nebulous understandings of gender, sexuality, and queerness that are rooted in a multiplicity of intersectional experiences and histories. To restory today's homonationist curricular project, one must first understand the unique role queerness has and continues to play within the US social imaginary, for it is only by actively *unimagining* queer existence, by unravelling from consciousness those narratives that do not fall in line with appropriate U.S. citizenship, that a normal queer citizen becomes possible. This constitutes, as one participant of this dissertation project noted, acts of *destorying* (Ari, S2A20191202), of erasing community history through both passively and actively unimagining queer life. Destorying is, as queer theorist Heather Love (2007) explains, an

attempt by a nation only now open to limited, queer inclusion “to write off the most vulnerable, the least presentable, and all the dead” (p. 30).

Expanding this line of thinking, this chapter traces how, for queer educators, destorying functions on the individual and the community level as an epiphenomenon of growing up in a world devoid of positive queer representation. Born of this world, destorying is a primary facet of the imagination gap for queer adults, manifesting in either failure or an incapacity to interpret queerness’s existence all together. To experience such hermeneutical failure does not mean, however, that we are rendered powerless by it. For as Jack Halberstam (2011) asserts, failure is a queer art, one through which we might find new modes of relating to the world and through which we might create spaces to do reparative work (for more on this see chapter 6). Achieving such a goal, however, is predicate upon first understanding the colonized space of our own imagination, how it has been shaped through a paucity of representation of queerness in all its intersectional vibrancy. Accordingly, in this chapter, I follow the emergence of *destorying* and its articulation throughout my dissertation project and trace its contours in the responses and discussion of queer YA literature among participation. Seeking to illuminate the impact of growing up in a world without self-representation in childhood, I focus on destorying to reveal the impact of the imagination gap within the queer community, both on the individual and community levels, and then turn to forgetting and fear—vital aspects of affective life—as means to challenge those homonationalist projects actively shaping the inclusion of queer representation in US schools.

Homonationalism Represented in Schools: A Review of Literature

With the rise of queer representation in contemporary news and popular media, so to have questions of queer historiography and the placement of queer history within U.S. K-12 education risen to the fore. Leading these efforts, the passage of the *Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful* (FAIR) *Education Act* in California in July 2011 amended state education codes regarding social science education, demanding the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals within curriculum (Vecellio, 2012). Such efforts have set off a slow but steady chain reaction as in February and March of 2019, New Jersey (Adely, 2019) and Illinois (RT International, 2019), respectively, adopted FAIR Education Act inspired policies mandating the inclusion of LGBT individuals within social studies curriculum. Exciting strides for educational reform, such shifts in policy have not, however, resulted in swift adoption of curricular changes, nor to altered pedagogical training for K-12 educators (Cano, 2019), and despite research calling for the further inclusion of LGBT history into K-12 contexts (Maguth & Taylor, 2014; Mayo, 2011; Thornton, 2003; Vecellio, 2012), such integration is slow moving and not unidirectional. Furthermore, these changes raise concerns regarding which LGBT people are being included within queer history curricula as well as which historiographical methods are being used to determine who comes to represent queerness within historical narratives of the US.

Scholars of gay and lesbian studies (Halperin, 1990) as well as queer and trans studies (Amin, 2017; Dinshaw, 1990; Love, 2007; Stryker, 2008) have grappled with the challenges of queer historiography, of retroactively naming historical figures as gay,

lesbian, bisexual, or transgender and thereby fashioning them into contemporary representations of communities, cultures, and identities likely illegible in the past. These scholars recognize, nonetheless, the need for a history that recognizes the queer past (Bronski, 2011). Parallel to such research, history of the LGBT community in education lags behind and, as Karen Graves (2012) notes, often focuses on the reclamation of heroes, to the neglect of queer theory's more antinormative, anti-identitarian investments. Such fixity to strict identitarian categories holds grave import for questions of historiography as equally as for representations of the queer community manifesting in today's curricular materials. The first of their kind, these representations are the primary pillars structuring the imagination of US students in relation to nonnormative gender and sexuality as well as to queerness itself, and yet as Graves rightly points out, these representations often lack queerness altogether, returning instead to those ready-made identity categories queerness, in its origin, was invoked to trouble.

Such realities hallmark homonationalist times, yet such representational privileging meets with quick objection, as intersectional models of diversity apply pressure to hegemonic representation. In particular, extra-curricular texts and specifically literature for young people are proving viable in-roads for moving beyond the mere inclusion of LGBT content in US classrooms. As literacy researchers Mollie Blackburn and Jill Smith (2010) assert, "efforts to combat heterosexism and homophobia will always fall short in the absence of our ability to grasp the incredible significance of intersecting identities" (p. 626). Inclusion of LGBTQ+ content alone will not result in anti-oppressive education, and in fact, homonationalist impulses threaten to extend

colonial logics as they restructure the imagination around new norms of gender and sexuality equally as rooted in white Eurocentric conceptions thereof (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), regimenting them through the sanctioning and suppression of queer representation. Steeped in fixedly held identarian frameworks, these norms typically eschew fluid conceptions of identity and desire and, furthermore, are typically coded as white, cisgendered, able-bodied and remarkably non-deviant.

Literacy scholars of primary and secondary grades have, however, called attention to the production of such norms and have recognized in young people's literature the potential to expand the imagination. An invaluable hermeneutical resource, young people's literature can help queer and non-queer people alike to move beyond normativity as a structural agent of the imagination, allowing us to expand our interpretations of both the word and the world to honor queer existences (Freire & Macedo, 1987). The interpretation of non-normative ways-of-being combat normalization, challenging what, within the queer community, has been referred to as *homonormativity* (Duggan, 2002; Stryker, 2008). Addressing such concerns, Jill Hermann-Wilmarth and Caitlin Ryan (2016), for instance, raise concerns of developing a "single story" of the queer community (Adichie, 2009). Focused on the implications for our youngest readers, they explain, that "limited representations reify neoliberal ideas about sexuality's relationship to race and class, and encourage gay assimilation into normative but problematic, nonequitable institutions" (p. 847). To challenge such homonormative trends in the publishing of LGBTQ+ content in literature for young people, Hermann-Wilmarth and Ryan propose a dual reading of such texts: one that

makes note of intersectional presences and absences in LGBTQ representation and a second that adopts a queer lens in order to challenge normative aspects of these narratives (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2013). Concerned with the imagination of our youngest readers, this work calls attention to the need for a multiplicity of stories from even the youngest grades and for intersectional queer representations to be infused throughout US curriculum.

Similar concerns have been leveled for secondary students, and scholars of young adult literature have denounced similar homonormative trends in YA publishing, calling for expanded representations beyond those heralding the advent of the genre, namely white, cis gay male narratives (Coleman, 2019a; Crisp, 2008, 2009; Derritt, 2018). Recently, Malinda Lo's (2019) incisive assessment of award-winning LGBTQ+ YA teased to the fore the persistence of certain narratives within queer literature for young people. Comparing Stonewall Book Award winners with Lambda Literary Award winners, Lo demonstrates a clear preference on the part of both awards for queer cis male narratives, despite the rapidly increased publication of queer cis female narratives in both 2017 and 2018. Such research draws attention to subtle work of homonationalism in the publishing industry—that invitation to forget the multiply marginalized—while also foregrounding the need for intersectional perspectives to combat such trends in both publishing and in our reading practices. Ryan Schey (2017) in "Toward Intersectional Literacy Practices" points out that, not merely what, but how we read propels homonormative interpretations. To combat these interpretations, he invites readers to mobilize diverse ways of reading LGBTQ+ representation, moving beyond facile

assessments of them as good or bad. Instead, he recommends drawing upon diverse, culturally-situated ways of knowing to interrogate homonormativity and thus open all queer representation to assessment for both learning and critique.

By attending to shifts in LGBTQ representations in young people's literature, scholars of children's literature and literacy studies are attempting to stem homonormative influences on LGBTQ-inclusive YA, a literary genre that shares origins with the 1969 Stonewall Riots (Jenkins & Cart, 2018). This work is actively shaping the future of publishing and reading practices as it amplifies and promotes an intersectionally complex, diverse world. However, as young adult literature has long been considered a young people's genre, these works have not, however, reconciled themselves with the genre's potential for adults to grapple with echoes of the past—that erasure indicative of the imagination gap in queer adults—and with the force of a homonationalist project in schools, a force that continues to ask queer educators to forget their past, their pain, and thus their unique ways-of-knowing and navigating the world.

Forgetting Stories, Remembering Communities: A Theoretical Frame

Forgetting is a peculiar faculty of the human condition. It is one that, as Mordechai Gordon (2015) explains, opens up possibilities for imagining anew and for crafting worlds unfettered by the pains of the past. A fresh start, it seems that to forget is to loosen one from the dictates of legacy in ways that feel perhaps limitless: Indeed, what can't we imagine? However, as Gordon further argues forgetting is a paradox, a faculty held in sharp tension with acts of remembering. For the queer community, acts of forgetting and remembering are integral to formulations of *imagined communities*

(Anderson, 2006), ones forged around nascent representations only now piercing into the public domain and into schools. Homonationalist trends in publishing are, however, posing problem to the formulation of such imagined communities, particularly of the capacity for such communities to cohere within an imagination reforming itself around rapid expanses in diverse, intersectional representation. Calling attention to the nearly limitless permutations of identification and to the disparate histories that adhere to communities and groups, intersectionality applies pressure to the gossamer threads of the imagination as they attempt to hold together the multiplicitious queer community: these are threads homonationalist projects ask us to sever through acts of forgetting.

Relevant to this chapter's focus on homonationalism, Rob Nixon (2010) in "Unimagined Communities" rearticulates Benedict Anderson's (2006) foundational work as he explores the centrality of the imagination to national projects. He does so, however, to new effect as he subverts the impetus to treat the imagination as a reservoir of seeming limitless, positive potential. Instead, he considers the weight of *unimagining* existence—in essence, the act of actively removing from consciousness peoples and communities in order to propel nationalist projects. When applied to the homonationalism of present day and to the nascent inclusion of queer history in educational contexts, it is only through unimagining—through removing from conscious historical narratives of queer pain—that homonormative educational projects become possible. As Nixon explains, such unimagining begins as acts of willful ignorance that ultimately settle into habit, such that people and communities become "evacuated from place and time and thus uncoupled from the idea of a national future and a national memory" (p. 62). Unimagining

communities, therefore, teaches us to forget so thoroughly that it becomes a habitual act—an active and subconscious aspect of viewing and unimagining queerness in time, space, and schools.

Contemporarily, the queer community is no longer wholly unimagined, on a national scale. Instead, images of queerness are nascently coalescing within US social imaginary, shaped by the stories, narratives, and images deemed appropriate for US educational curriculum. Unimagining is not, however, merely a contemporary phenomenon, and its echoes remain. Within queer educators, the effects of such unimagining persists as habit taught in childhood, contouring an imagination gap (Thomas, 2019) within those most compelled and, furthermore, most likely to be called upon to educate about queer concerns, queer educators. As explained by Ebony Thomas (2016, 2019), an imagination gap occurs under the following circumstances: “When youth grow up without seeing diverse images in the mirrors, windows, and doors of children’s and young adult literature, they are confined to single stories about the world around them and, ultimately, the development of their imaginations is affected (p. 6). Described as the “failures of adults” (p. 6), such gaps refer to the incapacities of certain people to imagine diverse futures and ways of being due to a paucity of representations—of mirrors, windows, and sliding doors (Bishop, 1990) encountered in the representational landscapes of childhood and adolescence. For the queer educators in this study (myself included), such a failure did manifest, as time and time again we encountered the limits of our own imagination. Frankly, we were, in moments, unable to craft newer, queerer narratives due to a lack of hermeneutical resources for imagining life

otherwise and to habitual forgetting: We were actively *destorying* our own existence (Ari, S2A20181202).

Taking place both individually and as a community, this isolation of destorying as a manifestation of the imagination gap does come with a caveat. Gap language is always couched in deficitized perspectives; Accordingly, I want to assert, loudly and clearly, that queer people can imagine and, furthermore, that we imagine wildly. However, by growing up in a world that refused to recognize our existence in the books and media we encountered as children, within existing social frameworks, many, if not most of us, have been conditioned, to the point of habit, to actively unimagine our own existence: We have been taught to destory queer life.

Destorying the Individual: A Colonial Project of Forgetting

Coined by Ari in our 2nd session (S2A20181202), *destorying* surfaced conceptually in response to a collaborative grappling with queer historiography and with the recognition and frustration of queer erasure within both historical record and our own imaginations. While discussing divergent interpretations of a queer YA text written by a queer, nonbinary author of color, “El Bajío,” Ari, a white, queer, non-binary individual, proffered the concept of destorying to spotlight how power operated through our interpretations, shaping how meaning was made as we discussed intersectional representations of queer adolescence and queer history. Ari remarks:

We were talking about these issues of how to read a text, and am I reading this text correctly ...you can take a story that comes from a racialized perspective and then read that story from the perspective of white supremacy and destory that story in this way.

An interpretative act of erasure, destorying constitutes, in this instance, an act of narrative destruction, an unimagining of textual elements and narrative features born of marginalized perspectives that, in turn, creates space for white supremacist interpretations of queer texts. Alarming, such an act reveals the capacities for stories to be stripped of histories, to be interpreted through dominant social narratives of coloniality that ask us to learn (to the point of habit) to actively unimagine intersectional existence from within the queer community.

Such conscious unimagining makes possible homonationalist projects within U.S. schools. Daily, young people are being taught to erase those who are too queer, too of color, too disabled, too gender nonconforming, and too intersectional a combination of any of these things. Destorying expands the imagination gap as it creates imaginative impossibilities. These impossibilities occur at the point where representation no longer sanctions queer existence, and filtered through institutions, such sanctioning applies only to certain queer lives. Accordingly, this section foregrounds the critical valences of the imagination, demonstrating the impact of representation upon minds both young and old. Connecting destorying to homonormative projects in schools, this section argues that textual interpretation must progress beyond the colonized cartographies of the individual imagination. For on the individual level, destorying asks readers to forget, to remove from consciousness those aspects of the imagination readers would rather not confront (e.g., racist, cis-heteronormative, ableist readings of a text). As Ari asks, “Does taking... a

story from “Little Red Riding Hood,” that may or may not be a Western story and impos[ing] it onto this story. You know? What does that do? Is that a form of destorying?” Eschewing homonationalist interpretations that expand the imagination gap for queer individuals, I trace the conversation leading up to Ari’s coinage of destorying and argue for remembering histories of pain and privilege as a primary means of combatting the work of destorying (i.e., forgetting) upon the colonized imagination.

Forgetting Failures, Forgetting Privilege

Destorying was a concept generated through a series of responses to “El Bajío,” a queer young adult (YA) short story written by award-winning author Anna-Marie McLemore. During our second Restorying Session (Restorying Time), participants launched into a discussion of intersectional queer history that spanned the entire 51-minute session; they grappled with historiographical questions of representation as they sought to understand how McLemore’s rewriting of history and of fairy tale held implications for imagining queer bodies inscribed in historical narratives. Vital to our discussion were the myriad transactions (Rosenblatt, 1995) between reader, readers, and McLemore’s short story—the opening salvo to Suandra Mitchell’s (2018) unprecedented anthology *All Out: The No-Longer-Secret Stories of Queer Teens Throughout the Ages*. Placing queer folk back in time, “El Bajío” draws upon magical realist traditions to weave together fairy tale and narratives of queer empowerment; it uses “Little Red Riding Hood” as an originary text, yet transforms or restories the work by writing into existence histories and bodies long absent from the folkloric worlds of mainstream literature. Drawing upon her own histories as a queer, Latinx individual, McLemore

enlivens 1870s El Bajío, Mexico with queer of color bodies, with trans existence, and with histories and mythologies rooted in Latinx and indigenous cultures.

For many, reading this text was a novel experience, not only as it fundamentally reweave a foundational Western fairytale, but as it demanded a reconsideration of when and where queer people, trans people, people of color, and all the intersections thereof have existed within history, literary representation, and consciousness. For Margarita, who shared several aspects of McLemore's Latinx queer heritage, reading this text was unlike any other experience; shaping the trajectory of our conversation, Margarita explains, "I have never felt so comfortable with the text" (S2B20181203). A peculiar feeling—comfort—was foundational to Margarita's textual transaction. Grounded in lived experiences, their interpretation and transactions with the text, in essence their phenomenological experience of it, were shaped by biopolitical relations to certain affects across their lifespan (i.e., their affective life (Anderson, 2014)). As Margarita explained, the Spanish words were dropped "just in the right place, where it would be the right time to...that a native speaker would do" (S2B20181203). Seeing a mirror (Bishop, 1990) to their cultural and linguistic background, Margarita recognized in the arrival of such comfort, however, the absence of having never before experiencing it: Why are they only now experiencing such comfort with a text? Delayed until adulthood, this encounter with an intersectional mirror, a Latinx queer of color representation was to no small effect: "So, that was really powerful. It was a queer text. It was written by a queer Latinx person. All of it, I have not felt, ever, in my life...I loved it" (Margarita, S2B20181203).

One of the first comments of the sessions, Margarita's invocation of their identity, their experiences, and the affective nature of their transactions with the text shaped our conversation, turning it to questions of colonization and representational control and of the power such control exerts over queer educators' affective lives. Markedly, a number of participants—myself included—did not, however, recognize McLemore's text as a reconfiguration of the "Little Red Riding Hood narrative," and when Coyote named it as such, anxieties stirred regarding the potential to enact a colonizing reading of the text, one that that would *unimagine* the cultural, linguistic, and indigenous features of the text—those textual elements integral to Margarita's own transaction with "El Bajío":

Josh So, how much does this story, sort of, subvert or like remain really within the Latinx context of the author, that the author's trying to draw out and can we read the "Little Red Riding Hood" into it or is that sort of like impressing ... I don't know if colonizing is the right word, but like using this sort of like Western myth, to like situate a myth that's drawn from more of a Latinx context, if that is fair to do?

Ari What is the connection to the "Little Red Riding Hood"?

Josh Yeah...how, Coyote, did you read it as the "Little Red Riding Hood"?

Coyote Just overwhelming themes...like the most significant figures in Red's life. Like, her name is Red. She wears this red cape to go rescue this character who is referred to as the wolf, and then the constant reference to like the abuela, it just made me think grandmother, wolf, Red, pancho. I just thought red riding hood and like the red hair.

Josh [laughter of disbelief and recognition] That makes a lot of sense.

Claire Yeah. That does.

Helen That makes so much sense and I didn't pick up on it at all.

(S2B20181203)

This exchange calls to the fore a number of representational and interpretative concerns, all of which hover at the edge of consciousness. Hesitant to impress a Western fairy tale and mythology upon an indigenous story, my opening question originates from a failure to recognize “El Bajío” as a restoried version of “Little Red Riding Hood.” For me, such failure resulted, at least in part, from an attempt in the words of Zetta Elliott (2010) to “decolonize the imagination”; I shaped my reading of the text, by unintentionally bracketing hermeneutical frameworks necessary to provide a reading consistent with the author’s vision for the story. Approaching what I knew was a queer of color, indigenous narrative, I bracketed my own linguistic and cultural heritages in my interpretation of the text, and I was not alone. Likewise Claire, Helen, and Ari all failed to read the story through the prism of Western fairy tale. While such an action might be viewed as an opening of McLemore’s text to non-Western readings, I instead question if such a reading does not speak instead to a desired forgetting, to a cultural amnesia indicative of homonationalist times. Might such a reading, a bracketing and forgetting of the Western ideologies that have so fastidiously shaped the childhood imagination—its hermeneutical infrastructure—instead gesture towards a contemporary attempt to dissemble colonized imaginings altogether? Much as racism has shifted form in response to 21st century “color-evasiveness” (Annamma et al., 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2014), so too might colonizing structures of the imagination now hide in plain sight, exerting their interpretive force through a false promise of forgetting the past.

Such readings, I contend are an example of how destorying functions on the level of the individual; it is an invitation to forget, to deny the complex, overlapping, and even

discordant readings that are part and parcel of a postcolonial world. As a white person and a settler, to bracket the West, while on one hand an impossibility, on the other is an enticing invitation to forget (Gordon, 2015). In a move conceptually similar to that of color evasiveness (Annamma et al., 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2014), to destory is to asks readers, particularly privileged ones, to read outside of our prejudices, our upbringings, and our legacies. It is to shift out of consciousness hermeneutical resources that have settled themselves deeply within the adult imagination; it is to deny those structures and forms that, across levels of consciousness, enlivening our means of interpretation, of knowing the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Epistemically privileged resources (Campano, 2007; Moya, 2001)—whiteness, coloniality, maleness, cisness, heteronormativity—forge a “cartography of the imagination” that, as Ebony Elizabeth Thomas (2019) describes, is “irrevocably inscribed by its victors” (p. 25). Conquered lands, the imagination is not, however, an immutable cartography (Chapters 5 and 6 explore this point in detail), for the adult imagination can be recharted. To do so however, one must first be attuned to the imprint of colonialization and, by extension, homonationalism upon the imagination.

Work without end, those occupying privileged social positions, particularly within the queer community, must seek to unsettle the sediment of the past, to transact and discuss stories that foreground intersectional experiences in challenge to the homonationalist regimentation of queer representation. In the latter interchange above, one taking place between all white participants, the invitation to forget the privileged positions from which we were reading—ones made visible through intersectional

analysis—might be read as falling prey to that homonationalist impulse. Coining the term homonationalism, Jasbir Puar (2007) explains that “in the United States at this historical juncture an opportunity for forms of lgbtiq inclusion in the national imaginary and body politic rests upon specific performances of American sexual exceptionalism” (p. xxiv). Grounded by homonormative expectations intertwined with “sexual exceptionalism,” “regulatory queerness,” and “the ascendancy of whiteness,” Puar indicts the ways in which the US sexual imaginary has incorporated certain white homonormative subjectivities into the national imagination to totalizing extent. She then goes on to advocate for transnational interpretive frameworks that apply pressure to such naturalizing—what I position here as acts of forgetting—by which white, settler conceptualizations of gender and sexualities become the prevailing interpretative framework for understanding queer life. Homonationalism thus speaks to a restructuring of the individual imagination, whereby inclusion of queer life comes with the invitation to forget that no less structure the imagined worlds we create in each act of reading and writing: We must not forget.

Remembering Privilege, Remembering Affect.

In contrast to mine and others’ readings, Coyote and Margarita mobilize a more robust interpretation of McLemore’s work, doing so by reading their own affective responses to the text and using them to guide an oscillation between disparate hermeneutic frameworks; such “affective reading,” as I refer to it, holds great potential for challenging destorying’s homonormative invitation to forget as it summons multilayered interpretations of a single text, in this case “El Bajío.” Remembering their

histories, Coyote and Margarita's readings call upon pasts of both privilege and marginalization that, via different means, foreground the subversive nature of McLemore's text and thus demonstrate restorying's potential to recast normative elements of Western narrative that can, in turn, decolonize the homonationalist imagination:

Coyote Yeah... [I read it as] like a reverse, kind of empowered little red riding hood. But again that's what I was struggling with when I was reading it. It was like, I guess, to some degree my mind did automatically go to a very Western, European understanding of children's literature and looking for those familiar symbols that I would draw from French or German folklore. But, I don't know, I thought it was definitely, it had a different kind of empowerment that was impressive. It re-centered feeling and the affective in a way that European fairytales don't do, I thought it was really interesting. The power came from that ability to feel strong emotions and to have affective responses, ummm... Which again, I thought was really interesting.

Josh You were gonna say something, Margarita?

Margarita I was gonna respond to that point... because I also felt that. But as I was feeling it ... 'cause really early on, it was like the red ones, the red and the wolf. I was like, this is really familiar. But as I was feeling like this was very much like "Little Red Riding Hood"... No, it's okay. But the thing is ... also the story's told in a way that's, maybe, there's other accents of something that the author was also familiar with... I mean the story itself is very different obviously. But, really it was like a little, I don't know, it was like accents of what something that's more familiar... At least in the American context, definitely "Little Red Riding Hood."

(S2B20181203)

For Coyote, a white, agender individual whose background in English literary studies touched upon both children's literature and folklore, reading "El Bajío" summoned semiotic frameworks steeped in Western, European tradition. These frameworks rendered

visible the narrative elements drawn from “Little Red Riding Hood,” which in turn revealed McLemore’s subversions of that canonical tale: the way she locates empowerment by “recenter[ing] feeling and the affective” (Coyote, S2B20181203). For Coyote, their primary reading, which drew upon the Western imagination, makes possible the recognition of how McLemore plays with the narrative elements of the text, such as the inclusion of queer and trans bodies and the centering of feeling and emotion—a strategy often connected with traditions of queer of color feminism (Ahmed, 2014; Combahee River Collective, 1986; Lorde, 2001). Refusing to forget, Coyote’s reading presents the necessity of remembering both the colonization of our imagination and our desperate need to expand our imaginative capacities. Calling upon multiple histories, Coyote oscillate between interpretative frameworks, revealing “El Bajío’s” Western origins as well as the capacity for indigenous and feminist of color storytelling practices to restorying Western narrative.

A refusal to destory, this movement between interpretative frameworks combats the invitation to forget, echoing Schey’s (2017) advocacy of *intersectional literacy practices*—practices which eschew monolithic reading and advocate multiple interpretations of any text. Extending Schey’s position, Coyote’s interpretations further reveal the role affect plays in guiding the interpretation process. While familiarity with Western folklore leads Coyote, “automatically” (Coyote, S2B20181203), to a Western reading of the text, attunement to feelings of discordance—to elements of the storyworld that contravened their understandings of Western fairy tales—proved revelatory. This feeling of discordance revealed the need to oscillate between interpretations in order to

resist destorying, while also honoring the text's restorying of "Little Red Riding Hood." Transforming source material, McLemore's restory acts as a form of narrative subversion as it recrafts a Western narrative from the perspective of an indigenous queer woman. For Coyote, the subversive interplay of restoried textual elements within a traditional Western fairy tale, registered affectively as "impressive," "really interesting," and "a different kind of empowerment." Reading their own affective responses, Coyote demonstrates the need for readers to be attune to the vagaries and contradictions of their own affectivity while reading. We must become aware of multiple histories as they shape our transactions with texts, and we must actively draw upon hermeneutical resources gathered from multiple histories, even those seemingly at war—Western, indigenous, Eastern, etc.; For it is through the interplay of histories, hermeneutics, and interpretations that textual transactions gain their affective resonances, revealing the contours of a colonized imagination as well as the impacts and potential of destorying and restorying.

Similarly, Margarita draws upon their past and their affective response to mobilize multiple interpretations of "El Bajío." Calling upon funds of knowledge rooted in Latinx and mestiza heritage (Moll et al., 1992), Margarita shares a complex interplay of affective responses to the text. They espouse first feelings of familiarity with the protagonist Red's story, yet they also describe something more, something that exceeds the narrative alone: "there's other accents of something that the author was also familiar with" (S2B20181203). This comment recalls Margarita's initial description of the text as holding, for them, a sense of linguistic authenticity—one which they experienced as comfort. Braided interpretations born of Western, Latinx, and mestiza life, Margarita in

her comments reads her own affectivity, noting a sense of something more, of something that exceeds the Western fairy tale serving as “El Bajío’s” source story. They refer to that excess as “accents,” as meaning encoded (Hall, 2006) by the author that encourages—with delicate subtlety—a subversive reading of the text, one that eschews an exclusively Western interpretation. Margarita’s recognition of authorial “accents,” honors the text’s multilingual features, as it also gestures towards a certain oscillation in Margarita’s own responses to the text. Recognizing spikes in intensity, in the affective changes of their own interiority—what they call “accents”—Margarita engages in an affective reading that draws upon funds of knowledge to render legible story elements in excess of the traditional “Little Red Riding Hood” narrative.

Coyote and Margarita’s readings demonstrate a need to remember the past, to mobilize multiple, even contradictory, readings of a text in order to challenge the homonationalist impulses to forget, impulses to erase the vibrant diversity in the queer community. For both individuals, their oscillatory readings were born of their own affective responses; attuned to the subtle intensifications and diminutions of interior response, affect became central to their transaction with the text as it asked them to remember histories, both theirs and others, and thus challenged inclinations to forget. This transhistorical approach challenged the homonationalist inclination to destory, by defamiliarizing the habitual impulse to forget privilege and intersectional queer life, and it did so by calling upon and moving across multiple histories of pain and pleasure. Existing on the cusp of conscious expression, the feelings of pain and marginalization that often exceed our capacities to story, ones that cling to histories of colonization and to

queerness, do nonetheless allow readers to cross the threshold of consciousness, surfacing preconscious affectivity in moments of textual transaction. Moving from forgetting to remembering, affective readings such as those demonstrated by Coyote and Margarita can deny the impulse to forget, reinforcing multi-layered readings of texts that, I believe, provide inroads for recharting the cartography of the colonized imagination in challenge to homonationalist frameworks of interpretation.

Destorying Community: Unimagining Queer Generations

Writing this chapter in June of 2019, I can't help but be compelled by the 50-year anniversary of the Stonewall riots. That history hums in my mind as I write an academic text committed to thinking about queer life and the affects that surround it. However, I cannot help but also be struck by the ubiquity of rainbows flags, appearing in even the most unlikely of places. They bespectacle the streets of Philadelphia, the Wawa on the corner, the colors of a passing dog's sideways bandana; they flood my social media feeds in a waterfall of multicolored branding—links to products conveniently included. Unprecedented in scope, this seeming effusion of pride and queer acceptance is invariably linked with capitalist projects: “pink capitalism” as the commodification of LGBTQ+ inclusion has come to be called. In the midst of a more colorful, more inclusive future, where though does history reside? Where are those queers lost to AIDS? Where are the countless individuals fired, adjudicated, and even murdered for their sexual and gender divergence? Anchored to capitalist futures, what does such “pink capitalism” ask us to forget? As we well know, Stonewall was a riot and so too the revolution at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco. So where do those histories belong in today's

movement towards inclusion, in an inclusion typically steeped in homonormative and, furthermore, homonationalist values, which function only through our promise to forget the pain of the past?

In the midst of a world aflame with color, I also became aware of a rising counter-culture within the larger queer community, one whose fight for queer liberation took to the streets of Philadelphia. Advocating for queer liberation, this counter protest sought to call attention to Pride's capitalist impulses, foregrounding queer histories, particularly ones saturated with pain, to advocate for a justice that eschews homonormativity ("No to Rainbow Capitalism," n.d.):



Figure 4.1. Queer Liberation Not Rainbow Capitalism

Taking place in 2019 in the streets of Philadelphia, Figure 4.1 above shows an alternative or anti-pride march that anchors itself differently in history, in a queer radicalism born of

the AIDS epidemic and Queer Nation: The lead banner reads “Queer Liberation Not Rainbow Capitalism” as the pink triangle of holocaust history waves behind it. The symbol is framed by ACT UP’s iconic slogan, “Silence = Death.” A powerful call to remember, these black, white, pink, and lavender colors summoned histories of oppression; it grounded me as I continue to write, an invitation to refuse the siren’s call to forget, by remembering diverse and multiple community histories and thereby challenging those homonationalist projects of destorying so easily mobilized within the postdiluvian promise of the rainbow.

Writing against this backdrop, in this section, I will explore the contours of destorying as it operates at the level of the community. Whereas destorying on the individual level speaks to forgetting—either dominant hermeneutical frameworks or marginalized ones—on the level of community, destorying functions through unimagining queer existence; it is an active and passive act of interpretative removal, or erasing from consciousness, communities, cultures, and lives from historical narratives that stretch from the past to the present. In this section, I detail the impact of such erasure upon queer educators’ imaginations by tracing a discussion of the film adaptation of Emily Danforth’s (2013) *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*—a YA conversion therapy narrative set in the early 90s in the Great Plains region of the US—as we explore the limits of the queer imagination and its connection to unimaginable futures, unrecognized pasts, and actively unimagined communities.

Unimaginable Futures

The limits of the queer imagination revealed itself through a discussion of queer history, specifically during a conversation surrounding the film adaptation (Akhavan, 2018) of Emily Danforth's *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* (2013). A 2018 film starring Chloë Moretz, *Miseducation* details the experiences of a young white queer woman who undergoes gay conversion therapy in the early 90s Great Plains region of the US. A Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize winner, the film foregrounds questions of religiosity, trauma, and adolescent queerness that culminate in the three primary characters escaping the conversion therapy camp to uncertain end. The film's conclusion resists closure with these young people, two of whom identify as BIPOC, embarking on a journey to unknown end, ones that in 1993 would likely realize themselves unevenly in both opportunity and access. For the participants in my study, this ending elicited a great deal of controversy (further explored in Chapter 5). Of particular importance was a conversation about queer generations that surfaced in response to these grapplings, and this conversation in turn revealed how destorying contours the imagination to forget, not merely as individuals but on the community level.

Focusing first on an exchange between Claire and Helen, I demonstrate how these women's comments reveal the imagination gap at work: how representational mirrors for queer people have been so exceedingly limited that life itself becomes, at times, unimaginable. Extending our discussions of *Cameron Post*, that exchange went as follows:

Claire I think ... I'm trying to think back. As someone who, I wouldn't go as ... my experience was not like the literal camp that I was sent off to, but it was definitely more forced religious education. Sit down and pray for the whole day to pray the gay away. I remember strictly leaving those church sessions and finding comfort with other people who were experiencing homelessness like people living on the streets. That's where I found a lot of community. That was the older generation that I had. At that time I was like 12, 11, 12. It wasn't...[hesitation] people, I'd say people were like... the oldest was probably 27, 28. That, to me, that was, oh, that's cool. Older people and when you're that age. That's what I had. I think even thinking back now, I'm like, okay, that's 27, 28, that's young. That's really young. For that to be the people, but then that's also a main experience for a lot of people. I don't know.

Helen It also prevents you from being able to imagine being, getting old. You know what I mean? I could not imagine myself growing old and having a family or even a relationship.

Claire I didn't even think I'd make 24. Shit.

Helen Being older and having an established life. I couldn't even picture it.
(S3A20190122)

Revisiting her religious upbringing, Claire, a white Jewish woman, recalls experiences echoing those of Cameron Post, of “forced religious education” in which Claire was asked to “pray the gay away.” For her (as for many participants), religion provided a fraught reflective space, a locus of rejection and frankly colonizing practices, in which liturgical performance and rituals of pray were utilized, in attempt, to strip away “SSA” (Same Sex Attraction)—to borrow from *Cameron Post*. For Claire, however, she found solace—what she describes affectively as “comfort”—in the homeless community of which she was a part. It was there that she also found queer community and an older generation—the oldest being just 27 or 28 years old. At 29 myself, to write that sentence is truly heartbreaking to me, to know that I have exceeded the eldest queers of that space,

of a community's generation. Such realities, all too common, speak to the challenges of queer generations; it is no secret that heightened rates of homelessness and mental illness cling to the queer community (Human Rights Campaign, 2018), and it is no secret that each of these have their own correlation to death. What does remain a secret, however, is the impact these experiences have across generations, shaping the imagination: in Helen's words, it prevents "you from being able to imagine being, getting old."

Helen's statement is an ontological one, revealing how the imagination gap forms when confronted with representational absence. Never seeing older queer people in adolescence, neither in texts, nor in life, one might cease to imagine such existence altogether, shaping queer adulthood into a narrative of impossibility. For Helen and Claire, to imagine queer life beyond their 20s was, simply put, impossible. Not only had they never seen it, but they lacked the hermeneutical resources necessary to imagine it: the possibility of becoming a queer adult did not exist. It could not occupy space within consciousness, guiding them toward certain potentials—toward, as Helen notes, "growing old," "having a family" or even a "relationship." One reading of this lack of imaginative potential might present such a gap as the marker of queerness itself: the reality of having no models of family, relationships, and even old age can be seen as freeing queer youth to explore developmental temporalities outside cis-heteronormative timelines (Halberstam, 2005).

Importantly, however, I find that such representational injustice demonstrates the potential for destorying to erase queer existence at an ontological level. Born of an adolescence devoid of representational mirrors, this incapacity to imagine queer

adulthood evolves into a passive feature of the queer adult imagination; it transforms itself into a habitual process of destorying queer life, of erasing queer futures, while also effacing the lines of connection central to forming an imagined queer community (Anderson, 2006). In gross, for those of us who in childhood did not see ourselves represented, neither in literature, nor in media, nor in everyday life, the capacity to imagine queer futures remains remarkably challenging. Structured to the point of habitual erasure, the queer adult imagination often lacks the hermeneutical resources necessary to imagine queer life, queer futures, and queer community into existence. For, as Claire and Helen expressed, imagining a queer life beyond the mid-twenties was beyond the limits of their imagination: if we cannot imagine a future for queer life, how then can we form affective attachments to and community around those futures? How can we long for, hope for, or even survive for a community that is beyond the imaginative reach of speculation?

Homonationalism again speaks to a slight shift in such ontological erasure. Slow moving, experiences like Claire's and Helen's are likely to change such that it is not queer life that is removed from consciousness; it is queerness itself. As white colonial mindsets persist, driving the shifting US imaginary to incorporate homonormative subjects, queerness threatens to become something altogether normal. However, that normality is wrapped in whiteness, gender conformity, and ableism, to name but a few of the many axes of power and privilege homonationalism threatens to naturalize. A way of shaping the US imagination, homonationalism shifts representation to include certain queer life, affording access to a few at the expense of the many. Communal history,

however, provides mechanism for eschewing the normalization of queerness as it provides insight into past injustices, into the feelings of inequity and pain that galvanize remembrance and denial of the homonationalist impulse to forget. Learning the histories of our community, particularly of multiplicitious queer life, is however no small feat for the queer community as our stories have been, for generations, easily and violently erased or fastidiously controlled.

AIDS and The Missing Generation

While queer history itself is only nascently coalescing on a national scale, a specific historical moment loomed large in our restorying conversations—namely, the AIDS epidemic that ravaged U.S. queer communities in the twilight of the 20th century.¹⁶ Though the apex of the plague took place nearly thirty years ago in the late 80s and early 90s, teaching about the AIDS epidemic has drawn noticeably little scholarly attention, neither within curricular studies nor within literacy education. This painful history has, however, gained increased representation in extra-scholastic spaces, namely in literature and media. For instance, my own teacher's guide (Coleman, 2018), "Mourning A Missing Generation," demonstrated the capacity for Judd Winick's graphic memoir *Pedro and Me: Friendship, Loss, and What I Learned* to create space for queer history in literacy classrooms. Likewise, movies and television shows about the crisis—most notably the recent FX sensation *Pose*—are raising awareness of the need for such histories to be told, specifically those histories' uneven impact upon queer communities

¹⁶ For more on the AIDS epidemic see David France's (2016) *How to Survive a Plague*.

of color, the trans community, sex workers, and other intersections. While such representations are exciting indeed that these histories' impact is only now surfacing merits consideration:

- How does an absence of shared history impact the queer imaginary?
- How does it shape the ways queer community forms?
- How and who surfaces in the imagination as part of the queer community?
- Furthermore, how do we texturize members of that imagined community affectively?
 - Are we more inclined to experience pleasure, joy, happiness as opposed to pain or disgust when we imagine certain bodies as members of the queer community?

Addressing aspects of these questions in our discussion of *Cameron Post*, Ari and Helen began to grapple with the impact of the AIDS epidemic upon the intergenerational queer community, considering how it shapes questions of mentorship and self-recognition. For instance, reflecting on a tweet addressing queer history, Ari expressed their dismay at the unknowability of the queer community, what it might have been had the AIDS epidemic not occurred:

We will never...when you think about all the families that could have existed or all the people who could have existed who died from AIDS-related deaths ... obviously I was aware before reading that tweet that lots of people have died.

(S3A20190122)

In this moment, Ari espouses longing for a past that might have been otherwise, for a world populated with the elders, families, and queer lives that simply never were. Incited by a tweet detailing the atrocious number of deaths that occurred during this plague, Ari expressed through their comments both a desire for otherwise pasts and shock registered in response to the historical facts of this national tragedy. Feeling queer history, Ari began to desire what Michelle Abate (2019) refers to as *queer retrosity*¹⁷—the desire to speculate queer futures beyond the painful histories attached to that community: for example, what might queer community look like had the AIDS epidemic never occurred? Quickly, tentatively, Ari reimaged the past, rebirthing queer lives that might have been and, in doing so, reopened the imaginative potential of queer generations, intergenerational learning, and an imagined community that never existed.

They continued:

I think I had never put together the fact that ... that happened, and that's maybe partially why I've never felt I had older queer role models. When I first came out, that used to be part of my narrative, was saying that I didn't know anybody who was older than me who was queer. I didn't know that I could be that...

We don't tell that story in that way. People think about, but because we think of queerness as not being a genetic thing, that people don't think of intergenerational queer community, but a large part of that doesn't exist. A large part of the reason that that doesn't exist is because of those deaths...

(S3A20190122)

Shaping Ari's queer narrative, in this quotation they call forward storytelling's malleable nature in ways that foreground the importance of imagining communities, of connecting

¹⁷ *Queer retrosity* has elicited substantial critique regarding the erasure of history. My understanding of queer retrosity and of speculation is predicated on an acute knowing of those painful queer histories writers are using as the source or originary material from which they speculate otherwise. This perspective does not, however, mitigate the potential for readers of said work to divorce those histories from their reading; this must be fastidiously challenged through peritextual and pedagogical efforts.

with others through imagined sameness. However, Ari's comments also gesture toward what happens when the reach of the queer community cannot be imagined across generations, when we believe ourselves to be the first and only of our kind, despite evidence to the contrary. Forging gaps in the adult imagination, the denial of queer history in adolescence limits our capacities to imagine certain life potentials and the accrual of cultural learning across time and space: 'I didn't know that I could be that...' (Ari, S3A20190122).

Helen quickly echoed Ari's sentiments saying, "I was the first person in my family to come out. I didn't know anyone else who was queer at all in my life. I had no one to talk to about this" (S3A20190122). Despite growing up in California to an upper-class white family, Helen like Ari lacked queer role models through which to make sense of their queer desires and from which to learn the cultural forms of queer existence. They imaginatively inhabited, throughout adolescence, an imagination gap that precluded the arrangement of hermeneutical resources—scraps of representations, illegible desires, and other distinctively queer feelings, sensations, and affectations—into a gestaltian (Iser, 1972) understanding of one's queerness. Denied community, denied history, one becomes illegible; we continually read an unknowable self whose queerness is beyond the limits of the imagination. Such preclusion of self-understanding is made possible through an absence of queer community, of interpretative models—representations of queer people—through which one might learn how to interpret their sexual desires and gender identity. Exacerbated by representational gaps—both in terms of queer historical narratives and intergenerational queer lives—destorying the queer community

perpetuates itself, at least in part, by our own incapacities to imagine queer life and to see potential in both the past and future for queer existence.

Unimagined Communities

While on one hand destorying the queer community operates as a passive feature of the imagination gap, on the other it functions as an active directive to unimagine queer life—a directive learned and reinforced in U.S. classrooms. As Harper Keenan (2017) deftly points out, classrooms have long operated as a primary locus for the regimentation of gender and sexuality. We have been trained to register only certain forms of gender and sexuality, allowing them conscious expression through interpretation as “straight” or “cisgender”—such is the work of the colonized imagination and homonationalism’s continual influence. Moreover, we have been conditioned to actively erase queerness or gender variance of any kind: This condition occurs, at least in part, through the association of negative affectivity—disgust, anxiety, fear, or even phobia—with non-normative gender and sexuality. Such conditioning reinforces compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980), which has gained increased attention in education. However, such reinforcement has yet to be explored in connection to the imagination and, furthermore, the *unimagining* of queer community (Nixon, 2010). As proposed by Rob Nixon, *Unimagined Communities* foregrounds the role the imagination plays in propelling national projects and holds particular importance for evaluating homonationalist projects undergirding the inclusion of queer representation in schools. A conscious and active act, unimagining communities involves the cultivation of “habits of imaginative limit, habits that efface from view communities that inconvenience or disturb the implied trajectory of

a unitary national ascent” (p. 62). Such limits of the imagination (further explored in Chapter 5) hold particular importance for queer individuals for whom legibility has often been beyond possibility within educational contexts.

While such habitual limits might be revealed in the policies and practices undergirding contemporary U.S. education,¹⁸ for the context of this study, I want to foreground one participant’s personal narrative—my narrative—to reveal another mechanism by which destorying shapes the imagination; it asks us to actively unimagine queerness, shaping how we imagine from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood. Within the discussions of queer generations incited by *Cameron Post*, I shared aspects of my own upbringing, explaining that despite a lesbian mother who was partnered throughout the entirety of my childhood—a seeming model for queer existence—I did not understand their relationship as one forged through love, intimacy, and queerness. Despite my knowing queerness existed—the fundamentalist church I grew up in made sure of that—I actively unimagined their queerness, yet I did so actively and habitually, a stark contrast to Ari and Helen’s more passive form of destorying, which stemmed from a paucity of queer representation all together. Responding to Ari and Helen’s earlier comments, I pondered,

I'm trying to think about it in my own life 'cause I did in theory have a model. My mom was there but we didn't ever talk about it. My mom's partner, who she was with all growing up for me, for 14 years, I literally could not even interpret them as being together. That wasn't even within my interpretive framework even though they're literally going and sleeping in the same bed, and we stayed at Cheryl's [(pseudonym)] house or we stayed at my mom's house. Everything was there, but I was also raised in a super fundamentalist household on my dad's side

¹⁸ For more on the historical systematic erasure of queer educators from U.S. Education contexts Karen Graves (2009)

because he was spurned by a lesbian woman, who he felt super jaded by, and wanted me to be in a perfect nuclear family so he also just put us in super religious environments.

(S3A20190122)

A direct response to my mother's lesbianism, my father turned to fundamentalism, moving me and my step-family four and a half hours away from family. Despite the distance, every other weekend, I switched cars and lives, spending time with my mother and Cheryl, along with the rest of my family. Regardless, it wasn't until I was 12 that my mother told me of her sexuality, doing so to begin a legal battle for custody. It was not until this moment, when my mother's queerness was named, that my interpretative frameworks pulled together the long available hermeneutical resources necessary to recognize my mother and Cheryl's relationship for what it was. I actively uninterpreted their queer existence. I unimagined their love; I unimagined their intimacy; I unimagined their and my community.

Sharing this story demonstrates a valuable difference of how destorying functions, how communities, identities, and people become actively unimagined, in addition to being merely unimageable. To be unimageable, as in the case of Ari and Helen, one simply lacks the hermeneutical resources or interpretative frameworks necessary to recognize a community, group, or person consciously. In contrast, to be unimagined speaks to an active removal of queerness from consciousness. It speaks to a refusal to pull together extant resources or to deploy interpretative frameworks in one's possession to recognize the existence of a community, group, or person. Connected to acts of forgetting, the erasure of queer peoples from educational contexts makes possible the

preservation of homonationalist projects as it allows us to deny queerness altogether or, equally as frightening, to choose which queers become recognizable—legible in curricula, in policy, and in the desks populating our classrooms. It reinforces a national future defined by what Lee Edelman (2004) refers to as *reproductive futurism*—the perpetuation of normative models of the family, relationships, gender performances, and sexual cultures propelled through the figure of the Child. Taught to destory passively, actively, and across time, children both queer and not promise the preservation of a social world free of social deviance, free of queerness, and of queer life by removing from consciousness the entire queer community and its history.

Fearful Interpretations for Intersectional Times: On *Affective Readings* as Literacy Practice.

To conclude this chapter, I want to return to a final comment Ari made in relation to destorying. Specifically, I want to foreground an aspect of queer affective life that holds particular importance for queer educators living in homonationalist times: the fear of forgetting. Returning to Ari's initial description of destorying, they extolled,

I think that destorying is a good term to identify that fear that you all were talking about because you were saying how, "Oh I don't want to read it wrong." Which I don't think your fear was actually like I'm gonna read it incorrectly from how the author wants me to read it, it was like a fear of like, I don't wanna read it in a way that's insensitive to structural oppression that this story is meant to challenge. Which I think are two very different kinds of fears.

(S2A20191202)

In this quotation, Ari draws out fear as a concern guiding our interpretations; it was, in Rita Felski's parlance, the "affective mood" (Felski, 2015) underlying our deployment and hesitancy to use certain hermeneutical frameworks to analyze our shared YA text.

For queer people in general, fear operates as a fundamental aspect of affective life, doing so across varying levels of intensities in a spectrum of fear (Ngai, 2005). At its least intense, fear—denatured into anxiety—animates the alarmingly high rates of mental illness and suicide that plague the queer community, particularly queer youth, and at its most intense, fear instantiates itself as homophobia, that persistent oppressive force that continually impresses upon and organizes queer life—where we go, with whom we go there, and how we “do” queerness along the way. Accordingly, Ari’s recognition of fear in our interpretations presents a useful way of thinking about the implications of destorying and the imagination gap for critical literacy education; it promotes a need for, what I am referring to as, *affective reading*—the capacity to read and make meaning of embodied affective responses in moments of textual transaction. (In chapter 6, I distinguish this from Rosenblatt’s [1988, 1995] efferent stance). Such capacity, I content reveals the feel of power (Boler, 1999), how it shapes queer educators’ affective lives, as well as spotlights the need for a *low intensity* fear of forgetting to challenge destorying across scales, from the individual to the community.

In proposing a pedagogy of fear to inform racial dialogue, Zeus Leonardo and Ronald Porter (2010) explain that even in a “safe space,” “fear is already in the room, not as a form of cul-de-sac or pessimistic analysis but a realistic appraisal of an existing limit situation,... we suggest that fear is an emotion that does not necessarily paralyze the educator or scholar” (p. 152). A so-called “negative emotion,” fear is not, however, inherently negative but instead opens relational possibilities for educators, ones made possible by understanding the imagination as always already racialized—structured

around colonial notions of heteronormative and, more recently, homonationalist representations of queer life. Fear can, however, lead us as bell hooks asserts in the epigraph to this chapter to “Thinking about the Imagination in a subversive way, not seeing it as a pure, uncorrupted terrain,” (hooks, 1991, p. 55). Raised in representational landscapes of whiteness and straightness, cisgenderness and more, our imaginations are not terra nova but, instead, are lands that have been shaped by power, both subtly and overtly, across the lifespan. I contend, however, that seemingly less desirable affects, such as fear, can invigorate the exploration of that interior landscape through the adoption of a wider array of reading practices; such practices can reveal intragroup privileges and, quoting hooks yet again, “under what conditions and in what ways can the imagination be decolonized” (p. 55) .

Critical to the contemporary shifts in queer representation in the US, homonationalism is actively shaping inclusion practices in school—what queers are represented in the body politic—and I believe that a bit of fear might not be such a bad thing to guide our interpretation of those representations. Fear is a prickly affect, one rooted in a pain and shock, that holds the capacity to defamiliarize particularly privileged interpretations (Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Shklovsky, 1965). Furthermore, as a codified emotion, it is knowable, culturally legible, and learnable in a way that allows us to make sense of how and which interpretative frameworks we mobilize as we make meaning with a text: we can learn to feel the textures of our imagined worlds, for example, the ways in which colonial logics shape how and which images we hold in consciousness. I propose, affective reading—learning to recognize various affects, like fear, as they

circulate and are felt within the body during reading events—as a means to decolonize the imagination. This approach, I contend, will provide novel implications for the study of literacy as a social practice and, furthermore, will provide means to locate how power operates through our interpretations and thus to begin recharting the imagination as we come to know those images that promote certain affective responses like happiness, comfort, or even fear.

As opposed to anxiety a secondary emotional state having no object, fear is an emotion in search of an object—the thing that incites our fear. Having an object renders knowable that which shapes our lifeworlds, both imagined and not; We can learn the things we fear and why we fear them, in ways that connect affect and the imagination in the form of the imaginary. Intimately linked with the imagination, the imaginary, as Philosopher Kathleen Lennon (2015) explains, is inherently affective; it is that aspect of consciousness that demonstrates the role affect plays in shaping how and which images surface within the imagination in particular temporal relations as well as within a given imaginary. One such imaginary relevant to queer life, is the homonationalist imaginary, which continues to weave itself into US educational contexts. Embedding itself in curricula, policy, and pedagogy, homonationalist projects threaten to propel representational injustice—the inequitable distribution of stories of multiplicitious queer life—and this injustice, in turn, threatens to animate pain anew for certain queer people.

Relevant, in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Sara Ahmed (2014) likens fear unto pain, as a felt experience of the present, one that registers in consciousness as "an unpleasant form of intensity" (p. 65). Distinctively, however, fear espouses a temporal

relation altogether different from that of pain alone. It, in Ahmed's words, "involves an *anticipation* of hurt or injury... [that] projects us from the present into a future" (p. 65). I am quite drawn to the notion of anticipation that positions affective readings as future-facing and attuned to mitigation of potential harms, both to self and others. Such anticipatory, affective readings become of particular salience in a world newly awakening to homonationalist projects and intersectional concerns. To be clear, I am not asserting that intersectionality is a new phenomenon, nor am I suggesting that the conceptual essence of intersectionality is new: it has existed for decades in the work of Black feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (2008), Audre Lorde (2001), and the Combahee River Collective (1986). What I am suggesting, however, is that the rapid conceptual expansion and usage of intersectionality to frame social oppression has opened a series of ethical questions that scholars are only now considering in relation to histories of representational inequity. In this moment of change, what might a bit of fear, with its anticipatory function do? Might it help us to address privilege, inequity, and questions of social justice more effectively? And might it provide means for recognizing and combatting acts of destorying, of forgetting in the lives of marginalized communities?

For the queer community, in particular, intersectionality has shone a much-needed spotlight on oppressive, intra-community dynamics that have often gone unnoticed on a national scale—even as these oppressions have been and continue to be felt by those

experiencing greater intensities of oppression¹⁹. As stated, homonationalist projects undergirded by homonormative values drive the inclusion of representation, legislation, and educational policy surrounding the queer community in education contexts. Literacy scholarship can, however, address such concerns, by inviting affective readings as practice for reading both the word and world. Such readings would address the varied affective moods that shape our interpretations as well as foreground the affective imaginary's influence upon queer life (Nichols & Coleman, 2020). While a variety of *affective moods* (Felski, 2015) available for affective readings will be explored for their critical value in Chapter 6, fear's anticipatory function provides a useful means of addressing the influence of the imagination gap and, particularly, destorying in the affective life of queer educators.

As expressed in this chapter, destorying is a process that both originates from and reinforces the imagination gap in queer adults. Operating across scales—from the individual to the community—destorying asks queer people to forget queer existence at an ontological level, and, as an ongoing process that is both active and passive, destorying persists as powerful means of removing from classrooms and curricula particular queer bodies, namely those who remain undesirably nonnormative and thus unincorporable into the contemporary US imaginary.²⁰ In the 21st century, as

¹⁹ This turn from “multiple marginalized oppressions” eschews additive frameworks, which the term multiple can summon despite best intentions. A turn to intensification thus foregrounds the relative qualitative and contextual nature of oppressions, coupling identitarian based forms of analysis with more contingent, affective driven ways of knowing the contours of oppression (Puar, 2012).

²⁰ Incorporability is not advocated here as the goal of queer affective life; Instead, to remain nonnormative yet not experience social injustice is. Homonationalism, however, threatens to fracture politic power by ushering certain queer individuals into power structures animated by normality. Educators must remain attuned to the siren's call of normality.

representations of queerness increase in unprecedented ways, destorying will function anew, propelling social injustice through homonationalism. Ingrained in the habits of queer adults, we will continue to forget the unrepresented—those queers who remain unsanctioned by homonationalist projects—who are, as Heather Love (2007) describes, “the most vulnerable, the least presentable, and all the dead” (p. 30). This is a reality of which we should be afraid, and perhaps now fear can be our guide to a more just future for queer lives. Provoking more varied forms of literacy practices, affective readings of fear can spark the oscillation of interpretative frameworks as fear makes visible the fearful object itself. For this group—one committed to queer justice in schools—that object was, in Ari’s words, a reading “insensitive to structural oppression that this story is meant to challenge” (S2A20181202). Combatting the impetus to forget (i.e., to destory), fear provides a vital means of reshaping the colonized imagination, all we need do is learn how to read it.

CHAPTER 5: IN SEARCH OF HAPPY ENDINGS: GENRE GHOSTS OF QUEER
LIFE AND THE NEED FOR CRITICAL SPECULATIVE UPTAKE

For all the lamenting I do that we never get happy endings as queer people, in terms of our media and our content, damn is it hard to write happy queer endings that don't feel fake.
(Coyote, PSTI20190506)

Genres are not just forms. Genres are forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action. They are locations within which meaning is constructed. Genres shape the thoughts we form and the communication by which we interact.
(Bazerman, 1997, p. 19)

For Derrida, what is inherited from the past is that which also constitutes the promise of the future. A welcoming of the ghosts of the disappeared, then, not only keeps the past—which is to break with it and relaunch it to keep it alive—but also guards the coming of a future that is not yet.
(Zembylas, 2013, p. 82)

Do queer people need happy endings? At the close of a narrative, do queer people deserve to be both living and loving? For Western literature, such endings are not a given, and in fact, narratives of queer life have, historically, concluded with unhappy endings: to be queer and to be alive at a story's end has long been a narrative impossibility for literature of the West. Chiseled in history, such representational landscapes have structured the imagination, and the impact of an absence of happy endings for queer characters has reinforced limitations for imagining the outcomes of queer life. Contemporary literature and media are, however, challenging such metanarratives born of an imagination gap, with Young Adult (YA) literature proving a particularly malleable genre for moving readers beyond “single stories” of queer life—and, perhaps more accurately, beyond queer death (Adichie, 2009). Described as an “open psychic structure”

(Kristeva, 1995), literature for adolescences, particularly the expansion of speculative fiction (spec-fic) within queer YA, is now challenging tired tropes of anti-queer violence in western literature—a trope which as Christine Jenkins and Michael Cart (2018) describe in *Representing the Rainbow in Young Adult Literature*, has been perpetuated by demands for realist depictions of queer life (p. 145).

In response to these demands for realism, speculation in queer YA as well as the proliferation of queer spec-fic broadly have opened avenues for reconsidering the influence of realness in life upon realism, the literary and rhetorical genre, and that has led to this chapter's guiding question: "do queer people need happy endings?". Foregrounding genre, this question demands consideration of the representational landscapes in which both realist and speculative narratives are situated and, as a Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) approach affords, how such genres expand or constrain the social actions attached to queer life. Born in the 1980s, RGS rearticulates conceptions of genre as only, formal literary features within a text, instead framing those features as instantiations of "social action" (Miller, 1984). Genres, within this framework, connect text with life, revealing the generic features of texts as instantiations of "forms of cultural knowledge that conceptually frame and mediate how we understand and typically act within various situations" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 4). Such a consideration of genre emphasizes then the gravity of unhappy endings operating as a long-standing generic feature of queer literature, for if texts mirror social actions in life, then so too does a representation landscape of death reflect historical expectations for queer existence, ones that continue to haunt the present.

To address such haunting, in this chapter I refract realist genres of queer life through the prism of critical analysis and RGS. Genre as positioned by RGS functions as a “powerful, ideologically active, and historically changing shaper of texts, meanings, and social actions” (p. 4), yet its relationship to power, the imagination, and queer happiness has yet to be considered. Accordingly, I trace how genre shapes the imagination and participants’ composing processes, by following the ghosts of the queer dead. In line with an RGS approach, I follow the *genre ghosts* of realist queer literature as it touches the lives and compositions of three participants: Through Coyote, I demonstrate how genre ghosts haunt compositions in the present; through Helen, I show how living with genre ghosts can shape new happy endings for queer life; and through Carlos, I reveal how a “critical uptake” (Messina, 2019) of speculation provides means to honor the genres ghosts of realist literature, while also composing toward more just representational futures. Ultimately, I argue that by attending to the genre ghosts that haunt us, queer educators might bridge the imagination gap and speculate beyond the realist “quagmire of the present.” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1). Restorying, I assert, is a speculative process that in this project invited participants to feel and compose both beyond pervasive narratives of death and towards happy endings—ones that, as Sara Ahmed explains, must be a queer happiness all our own.

The Critical Importance of Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS): A Literature Review

Despite genealogies of genre studies extending to Aristotle, literacy scholarship has seldom considered the critical affordances of those genealogies. Perhaps this oversight derives from a pervasive understanding of genres studies as belonging exclusively to the

field of literary criticism. Rhetoricians have, however, demonstrated genres' presence in the social world, interwoven with meaning making and the social actions of everyday life. In her foundational piece, "Genre as Social Action," Carolyn Miller (1984) launched the field of Rhetorical Genre Studies and redefined genre as "typified rhetorical action based in recurrent situations" (p. 159). Anchoring genre in life and, more specifically, in social action, Miller's work provides an inroad for the inductive approach to the study of genre. By this, I mean that, because RGS connects life with text, one might backwards construct social worlds based on how generic literary features instantiate themselves within a given genre. No longer merely literary, genres instead reveal themselves to be intimately bound up with living social actions; they are, as Charles Bazerman (1997) asserts, "the familiar places we go to create intelligible communicative action with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the unfamiliar" (p. 19). Providing pathways for navigating both text and life, the familiar and unfamiliar, genres anchored in RGS reveal the sociohistorical, contingent nature of genre and, in doing so, provide mechanisms for locating, harnessing, and reimagining power.

For queer life, the importance of RGS surfaces to address a representational landscape, in which queer realism has long been synonymous with death. As Heather Love aptly spotlights, "The history of Western representation is littered with the corpses of gender and sexual deviants" (p. 1). And such representational genocide persists, traceable across various media (Bridges, 2018), platforms (GLAAD Media Institute, 2017), and textual forms (Waggoner, 2018). A form of destroying (for more see chapter 4), such large-scale erasure structures the imagination gap, calcifying across the lifespan,

from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood. Narratives of adolescence, however, provide a unique point of malleability, particularly for adult readers; As Julia Kristeva (1995) describes, the adolescent narratives forms an “open psychic structure” (p. 136), in which the adolescent—a “mythical figure of the imaginary”—allows adults to “distance ourselves from some of our failings, splittings of the ego, disavowals, or mere desires, which it reifies into the figure of someone who has not yet grown up” (p.135). Kristeva’s point highlights that revisiting adolescent literature creates a means for adults to reengage their past, those psychic elements of youth one might rather “disavow.” To Kristeva’s work, I would like to add that adolescent or YA literature, furthermore, extends an invitation for adults to decalcify the imagination.

Excitingly, adults are taking up this invitation. As consumer reports of the last decade reveal, a large contingency of YA readership is adults, in some cases as large as 55% (Publishers Weekly, 2012). This uptick in adult readership corresponds with marked increases in diverse representation in YA literature as well as with queer YA featuring non-realist or speculative literary elements (CCBC, 2019; Lo, 2019), all this despite YA’s parallel history of unhappy endings. As Christine Jenkins and Michael Cart (2018) expose in *Representing the Rainbow in Young Adult Literature*, early depictions of queer adolescence similarly position anti-queer violence as “realist” accounts intended to represent the “inherent misery of gay people’s lives” (p. 17). Striving for verisimilitude, that felt sense of realness or the *realist feel* of such texts rely, as Thomas Crisp (2008) points out, on tropes that provide a “representation and interpretation of reality” that only “feel[s] ‘realist’ because they are recognizable” (p. 238 -239). Rightly, Crisp calls

attention to two vital aspect of realist genres relevant to RGS: first, that the “realness” of realist genres is based on perception and is therefore mutable, and second, that genres are intertwined with feeling, both positive and negative affects, that guide how readers perceive or feel about generic features of a text. Simply put, 1) a representation that feels “real” to one reader will not necessarily feel real to another and 2) past encounters with a given genre shape the assessment of textual representations in the present, as realistic or unrealistic, romantic or tragic. Nestled with rhetorical situations, realism from an RGS perspective becomes tied up with the affective aspects of reading and writing and with the emotional valences of genres themselves. And no genre has proven more emotionally impactful for queer life than the demand for realist accounts of unhappy queer endings.

While happy endings have long been an inherent feature of myriad genres (of fairytales, sentimentalist novels, and even comedic plays), for queer literature in general and queer YA in particular, such happy endings have only recently emerged as a feature of realist genres of queer literature, and these generic shifts continue to grapple with that emotional history of queer tragedy. In line with RGS, as Faith Kurtka explains, genres have histories of *accumulated emotions*, that “form an important part of writers’ history with texts” (n.p.). Essentially, readers cultivate histories with genres, and these histories are shaped by continual exposure to tropes, conventions, and narrative sequence that forge a representational landscape that structures the imagination around affect laden representations: princesses, castles, and happy heterosexual endings braid together and stick within the imagination as easily as queerness, homophobic worlds, and death. Accruing with time, such histories, especially those seemingly relegated to the past,

manifest in the present; they haunt the representational landscapes of today: *Genre ghosts* can haunt the imagination, contouring what we imagine around specters of the dead, in a relationship best described as a *hauntology* (Derrida, 2006; Zembylas, 2013).

As Derrida (2006) proposes in *Specters of Marx*, hauntology serves as a model for engaging with the dead without narrativizing them into a single, mournable story through which they might be reconciled to a forgotten past. Instead, as liminal figures, both present and absent, specters open pathways for engaging histories in the present, while also opening the future to radical possibilities that have yet to come. Tied to genre, hauntology invites the dead to live with us, to prick into awareness genre's continued shaping of our imaginations, while also providing resources from which we might learn to speculate towards future of otherwise. Realist queer YA today is certainly the manifestation of speculative futures of the past, as new tropes and narratives bloom in reflection of contemporary forms of queer life enlivened by today's digital world (Coleman, 2019a). As Derritt Mason (2018) explains, "In an era when young people have ever-growing access to queer media, it is noteworthy that storytellers remain invested in working through the attachments and longings of gay adolescence as influenced by the damage and trauma of homophobia, both external and internalized" (para 19). Vital, today's present future cannot be gained at the cost of erasing the past. Instead, we must live with and learn from the ghost of genres past, looking to that *realist feel* as a means to reframe unhappy endings for queer life as we imagine yet more just, yet more inclusive representational landscapes.

Speculating Happiness: A Conceptual Framework

Unhappy Queers in Realist Worlds

Genres animate power as they accumulated emotional histories and shape the imagination across the lifespan (Luke, 2018). For queer people, realism has proven to be a genre that exerts incredible force upon queer life, inviting or precluding happy endings in both text and the *real* world. Realism is not, however, universal but instead bends to the whims of readers, to their perceptions of what *feels* like reality. In support of this point, scholars have spotlighted the specious nature of truth claims to realist representation. African-American studies scholar Wahneema Lubiano (1991), for instance, illuminates how such claims artfully obscures the genre's fictional nature; she explains, "realism suggests disclosure of the truth (and then closure of the representation); realism invites readers/audiences to accept what is offered as a slice of life because the narrative contains elements of 'fact.'" (p. 262). Challenging this factual closure, Lubiano reminds us that "reality, after all, is merely something that resounds in minds already trained to recognize it as such" (p. 264), and for RGS such recognition proves central to the construction of realism over time. Lubiano here spotlights realities constructed nature, emphasizing how the construction of reality occurs within minds and imaginations already conditioned to receive it. Put another way, we accept only those realities we've already been taught are real, and consequently, a representation that feels real to one, might not, for another, feel real at all. Perceptual, realism is a genre based on assessment, and an often-overlooked aspect of that assessment is the felt sense that a

representation reconstitutes reality as we have already been conditioned to accept it. I refer to this felt assessment as *realist feel*.

Connected to narratives of queer life, this realist feel becomes of particular salience in assessing those queer happy endings, only now, appearing in literature, both for adults and for young people, and it raises interesting questions:

- Do representational absences in childhood shape the reading and writing practices of queer adults such that we are precluded from feeling certain happy endings as real?
- Furthermore, have the realities we image and feel as real formed themselves around gaps in the imagination (i.e., happy endings absent in childhood?)

Importantly, such questions gesture towards the reality that even as genres accrue emotional histories that invite certain reader responses—happiness, sadness, even catharsis—it is the readers who determine what constitutes those responses. For instance, so-called happy endings in queer realist literature does not generate, however, inherently happy readers and, in fact, raises questions about the desirability of happiness itself. Challenging happiness as the assumed telos of living, Sara Ahmed (2015) in *The Promise of Happiness* raises concerns relevant to a discussion of happiness’s “sticky” tendencies—its historical adherence to realist endings of queer YA. A foundational premise of her argument, Ahmed explains, “Heterosexual love becomes about the possibility of a happy ending; about what life is aimed toward, as being what gives life direction or purpose, or as what drives a story” (p. 90). Spotlighting the assumptions of inherent desirability embedded in happy endings, she argues that representations of

happiness in literature typically propel heteronormative lifeworlds, by attaching themselves to chrononormative timelines shaped around marriage, reproduction, and the family (Freeman, 2010). As Ahmed explains *happy heterosexuality* has become the desired, happy ending of Western literature (p. 90), doing so with dire consequences to realist representations of queer life.

Intertwining happiness with heterosexuality has functioned as an exercise of power, one that has historically shaped the queer imagination around representations of queer death, for these are the representations that, to both queer and non-queer audiences, feel real. Addressing this history, Ahmed (2015) avows that the “happiness of the straight world is a form of injustice” (p. 96) and, furthermore, is one that need be examined. An unfortunate truth, the heteronormativity of happy realist genres does, however, open up a queer potential, one located in the figure of the *unhappy queer*, who as Ahmed asserts searches for a happiness outside the confines of heterosexual norms (2015): “The unhappy queer is unhappy with the world that reads queers as unhappy. The risk of promoting the happy queer is that the unhappiness of this world could disappear from view. We must stay unhappy with this world” (p. 105). Resisting the closure realism proffers as fact (Lubiano, 1991), the unhappy queer invites one to question the realist feel of happy endings, by recognizing the arrival of genre ghosts of queer death. Opening the imagination to speculation, these genre ghosts offer queer adults’ valuable hermeneutical resources for reimagining the inequitable representational landscape that has shaped queer life—all we needs do, is lean how engage in uptake with them.

Critical Uptake of Speculative Genres

In “Tracing Fan Uptakes” (2019), Cara Marta Messina builds upon Anne Freadman’s RGS concept of *uptake* (1994, 2002), foregrounding its critical potentials. While uptake in RGS denotes the “interdependent relationships between genres, specifically the anticipated response to a genre in a particular context” (p. 6), *critical uptake* refers to a writer’s attempts to “resist harmful and exclusive cultural ideologies in their uptake” (p. 3). Attending to the circulation and exercise of power, critical uptake provides a means to analyze how genres—such as realism and spec-fic—might interanimate one another, operating as a sort of call-and-response that shapes reading and composing practices across time and space. To illustrate how uptake works, imagine a marriage invitation to a queer wedding; such an invitation would likely engender uptake through RSVP responses or through a letter of challenge to a local authority. Critical uptake as an analytical tool would spotlight how the RSVP, in the first case, reinforces hetero or homonormative expectations of marriage and, in the second case, how the challenge reveals blatant homophobia. Accordingly, to call attention to the critical valences of uptakes it to reveal the ways that power suffuses both the “artifacts” (texts) and “enactments” (social actions) uptake incites (Dryer, 2016).²¹ And such critical uptakes hold great potential for attending to the ghost genres that haunt queer adults as they encounter contemporary representations of realist queer YA with happy endings.

²¹ Dryer (2016) in “Disambiguating Uptake” disentangles the multiple ways in which RGS has been discussing the concept of uptake. Germain to this chapter, following Dryer, “artifacts” refers to texts, broadly construed, and “enactments” refer to social actions that take place in response to and around those texts. This distinction allows for a fine grained analysis of power as it is animated differently by texts and enactments.

Fraught, happy endings within realist depictions of queer adolescence need to be reconsidered, in light of the genre ghosts that haunt adult readers. In gross, realism with its accrued happy heterosexuality needs to be reimagined and so too that representational landscape historically littered with queer death. As Chimamanda Adichie (2009) warns, “Show a people as one thing, as only one thing, and that is what they become.” Queer realism must continue to move beyond its single story history, while also refusing to forget that history. Self-perpetuating, genres reinforce particular narratives, tropes, and other literary devices, shaping the imagination around them. For queer adults, realist genres have structured the queer imagination around a past devoid of happiness and queer life and, in doing so, has forged pathways through the imagination that have calcified becoming “sticky” with emotions: the realist feel is one such pathway.

Genres can, however, be recrafted, often slowly over time, and the feelings and pathways they create can be altered through speculation, through a yearning for otherwise that circumvents the impress of realism on our reading and composing practices. As Sami Schalk (2018) reminds us,

An important difference between speculative fiction and realist fiction is that speculative fiction does not purport to directly reflect reality... The freedom afforded speculative fiction authors through the rejection of verisimilitude, the use of nonmimetic devices, the disruption of linear time, and other tropes which subvert our expectations of reality are all beneficial to writers who wish to represent a world not restricted by our contemporary racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, and classist realities.

(p. 21-22)

Schalk describes speculative fiction as a form of “freedom” that shirks the rules of reality in pursuit a world free of painful histories, even if that be only in the imagination.

Powerful, to imagine in such a way is to pursue a present and a future in which the hauntings of realist history need not exist, where images of death and dying indelibly etched in the literary imagination might be suspended: haunting histories can help us rewrite genres and the social actions they animate, through speculation. To speculate, however, necessitates a knowledge of the here and now, a perception of the real, that might then be reimagined and restoried otherwise. That knowledge and how we might use it to bridge the imagination gap is what this chapter undertakes, doing so by tracing genre ghosts and the critical uptakes of realist and speculative literary features through the restorying processes of Coyote, Helen, and Carlos.

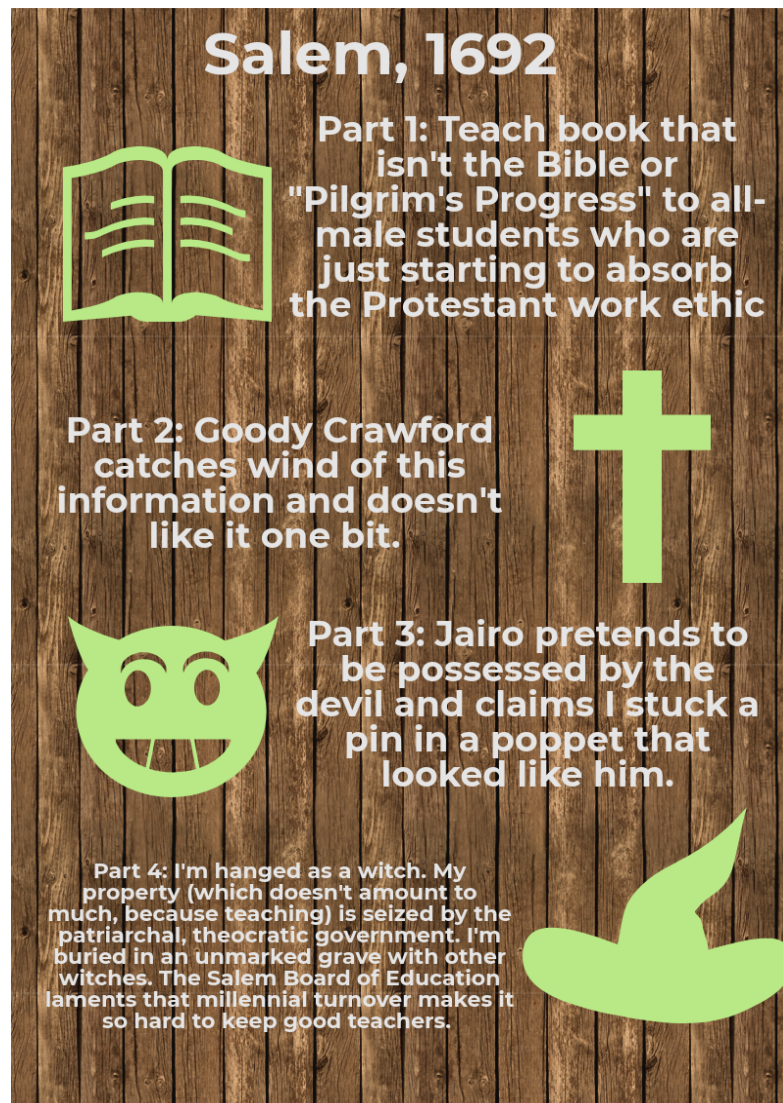
Recognizing Genre Ghosts: Feeling Real in a Haunted Imagination

In “Haunted by the 1990s” (2016), queer theorist Kadji Amin advocates for increased attunement to queer history and to the ghosts of the queer past. Specifically, he draws upon Sarah Ahmed’s notion of “stickiness” to demonstrate how *affective histories* of the past—particularly negative ones—animate or haunt contemporary queer life. Genre’s too espouse such haunting effects, shaping how individuals read, write, and imagine in the present, and furthermore, these genres are “sticky” with the emotional accrual of negative affective histories. For queer realism, the affective resonance of queer deaths within Western literature continue to haunt the imagination of queer adults, shaping that *realist feel* through which we make sense of and compose our textual worlds. Moreover, because these same feelings of realness are intertwined with ghosts, they reveal genres’ haunting effects in both artifacts and enactments embedded in the restorying process. Tracing such uptake, in this section, I focus on one participants

engagement with the past, isolating in their “time restory” the haunting effects of genre ghosts upon the imagination and their composing process.

Feeling Real, Feeling Genre

In their “time restory,” Coyote projects themselves into 1692 Salem. A fulltime teacher and part-time witch, Coyote sardonically recounts aspects of their originary story—of teaching a queer YA text and the resulting public shaming by both a district head and a student. Reconstructed as a Piktochart (Figure 5.1), their “time restory” recontextualizes central aspects of Coyote’s experience, representing it in a visual format that models itself—by Coyote’s own choosing—after Arthur Miller’s often-taught play “The Crucible”; this work is also infused with elements of our mentor text for restorying time, the short story “El Bajío” by queer Latinx author Anna-Marie McLemore.



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Figure 5.1. Coyote's "Time Restory"

While guided by the directive to restory time, Coyote demonstrates a recurrent truth of the restorying process across participants, that the six forms of restorying rarely take place in isolate. Coyote, for instance, in their "time restory" also restoried their narrative in terms of mode and place, all while maintaining salient features of the originary story.

Reimagined, Coyote's painful history maintains, nonetheless, a narrative about fervent adherence to canonical texts, the castigation and investigation by an educational elder, perceived vilification on the part of a student, and professional disapprobation and censure. Demonstrating the ways in which the restorying process often combines the six different forms of restorying—identity, time, mode, metanarrative, perspective, and place—Coyote's "time restorying" also provides insight into realism's haunting effect on the queer imagination, how even when invited to reimagine their story, the genre ghosts of realism shapes both the composition itself (artifacts) and the composing process (enactments) that surround it.

Revealing these ghosts at work, in their post-interview, Coyote's discussion of their "time restory" illuminated how realism constrained Coyote's composition, particularly as it shaped the imaginative play—what I position as a form of social action—in connection to historical accuracy and the construction of a happy ending. In their post-interview, when asked "did it occur to you to write [your time restory] with a happy ending?", Coyote responded:

Nope. Not even once. To be honest, you saying that is the first time I even considered the possibility....But no, I think the only way that it ends happily in a different time period is like, all the mean people get crushed by a tree or something which would be lovely. Or like, I don't know, a herald in the modern queer rights movement 50 years too soon, I don't know...But no, it just did not occur to me to make this a happy ending, and I think that is part of the thing. For all the lamenting I do that we never get happy endings as queer people, in terms of our media and our content, damn is it hard to write happy queer endings that don't feel fake.

(PSTI20190506)

Coyote's response spotlights a moment of consciousness raising, of growing awareness of the contours of their own imagination as it relates to their composition. Starkly, they mention that writing a "happy ending" in the past was something beyond the scope of their imagination; they had not even considered it, "Nope. not even once." Furthermore, that omission was one tied to the *realist feel*; as Coyote explains, the challenges of writing a happy ending rests, not in penning such a history, but in crafting a representation that doesn't "feel fake." This assessment of authenticity reminds us that representations of reality, whether of the past or present, involves an affective evaluation of a text that is based in the models of reality one already holds.

This connection between realist representations and our perceptions of reality are, as I would like to propose, ghostly. Shaped by genres of the past, perceived reality haunts the present, shaping the imagination and thus our composing process as *genre ghosts*. For Coyote, the genre ghosts shape their "time restory" such that they are unable to imagine and compose a happy queer ending—it simply never occurred to them—for doing so would be to preclude a realist feel. For them, such an ending would lose its verisimilitude and, consequently, the growing storyworld would collapse and so too did the potential to compose such stories in their own writing. Shaped by genre ghosts of realism, such a gap in the imagination and in composing precludes, for Coyote, brooked the potential for happiness to be represented in depictions of the queer past—all this despite their "lamenting" desire for happy representations in media and other content.

Conflicting, this affective state—the desire for happy endings that feel real yet the incapacity to compose them—spotlights realism's haunting effect upon the queer

imagination, an effect yet further illuminated by Rhetorical Genres Studies's sociohistorical perspective. Rounsaville (2017), for example, argues that genres are interwoven with the lifeworlds of writers such that "new or even repeated encounters with genres are being made, transformed, and affirmed within the flow of lived experience" (p. 4). Present in the quotidian steams of life, genres shape and are shaped by worlds of representation, of texts that represent life and flourishing, death and dying. For queer individuals, realism has become synonymous with representations of death, those read, written, and experienced throughout life, and in consequence, that realism exerts force as a feeling that haunts both interpretation and consciousness. To consider genres as ghosts is to recognize their present absences as a structure agent of culturally specified composing practices and, furthermore, that these ghosts reveal themselves through feeling. As Coyote demonstrates, their "time restory" was fundamentally structured by realism, for it was only those representations that felt "real" that arrived in consciousness to be uptaken as story features. However, I want to suggest, that by attuning ourselves to that realist feel, by growing to recognize those ghosts that haunt us, we can grow awareness of the realities we hold in the imagination and thus come to understand how they shape our composing practices—i.e., the story features we do or do not uptake in the name of realism. Learning to recognize these ghosts can thus allow us to expand our composing repertoires and social actions of life in the present.

Recognizing the Realist Feel

As our post-interview progressed, Coyote demonstrated a growing awareness of realism's haunting effect, how it shaped their life as a composer. They describe, "Again, I

very much feel [these ghosts] internalized in the queer imagination...I did a comic about it where I was trying to do a queer creative writing contest and the parameters for it was like it can't have a sad ending. We will not even consider it if the ending is sad. We don't want these tropes" (PSTI20190506). A comic books artist and cartoonist, Coyote describes here genre ghosts at work, specifically their invitation to compose a comic in which the trope of unhappy endings was foregrounded. Somewhat ironically, the comedic effect of the piece is achieved because such endings were forbidden under the contest's rules, even as the composing of such narratives remains, for Coyote, a seeming impossibility: "And I'm like so what are you left with? Because this doesn't seem real. It just seems like a forced Polyanna ending that's not accurate" (PSTI20190506). Haunted by genre ghosts, Coyote's isolation of the realist feel at work emphasizes how such feelings shape their composing practices, precluding representations of queer happy endings. Polyanna, such representations are, for Coyote, hyperbolic, transforming realist depiction of the past into cloyingly sensational tales that no longer feels "accurate."

And Coyote was not alone in experiencing the haunting effect of realism upon their "time restory" (See Appendix E for all "time restories" mentioned below). Likewise, Adam's "time restory," situated in 1890 Troy, NY, where he worked as a teacher, concludes as follows: "I moved one town over, married a woman, and began to raise a family as I hid deeper from myself." Unable to accommodate his existence, Adam's restory collapses potential speculative pasts into a realist account that is marked by a decidedly unhappy ending for queer life (i.e., through the destorying of Adam's queerness altogether). Helen, too, is haunted by the genre ghost of realism. her story,

situated in the 1945, recounts domestic abuse with an intimate partner. In her “time restory” Helen expresses a loss of self, one realized through three interventions commonly experienced by queer women in the 1940s: conversion therapy, shock therapy, and lobotomization—an unhappy ending indeed. Finally, in my own “time restory,” a picktochart entitled “The Impossible Faggot,” I reflect on my attempts to recontextualize my own painful history in the 1920s, expressing: “To write this restory thus became quite difficult. My desire to be ‘historical [sic] accurate’ stymieing my capacity to write and conceptualize the world. My perceived realities of the time impinging on my minds capacity to create, to imagine, to write the world otherwise, in which I as a queer white man might exist.”

While none of us recognized genre ghosts at work while composing, we were all, nonetheless haunted. As Coyote expresses, “I think when it comes to creating content and the queer imagination, the queer imagination is still very much restricted by the realities of history and the realities of the narratives that come out of history” (PSTI20190506). Accordingly, to recognize the genre ghosts at work, we must know the representational landscapes that birthed them; we must understand how genres are interwoven with life and with histories of life in ways that structure gaps in the imagination. For queer adults, it is vital to recognize such gaps and that we learn to recognize the presence of genre ghosts at work: feelings reveal these ghosts. For the haunted queer, the realist feel indicates a ghostly presence, the presence of the representations we have accepted as

reality. In the West²², such realities have formed around realist depictions of queer death that, despite knowledge to the contrary, are so pervasive that they have shaped the imagination around it. As Coyote shares, “when I think of history, I don't position queer people as having happy endings even though that's false. Plenty of queer people who did have some, like they found happiness. They found survivalhood, and they were able to thrive as people” (PSTI20190506). Coyotes words demonstrate a fundamental disconnect, between the knowledge that happy queer life existed throughout history and the feeling that representations of such lives are not realistic. To bring such knowledge and feeling into alignment is, then, of paramount importance, for to recognize as real those who have lived happy queer lives in the past is the first step towards bridging the imagination gap and towards providing necessary representations through which to compose new narratives of queer life, in which at the end of their stories, they might, quite simply, live.

Critical Realist Uptake: Drawing upon Genre Ghosts to Compose Queer Happiness

Recognizing genre ghosts presents a unique opportunity for queer adults and educators to commune with the dead—to feel backwards towards those representations of death we might prefer to forget (Love, 2007). As I argue throughout this dissertation, we must learn from our painful histories, including those that, littered with realist depictions of queer death, haunt our everyday lifeworlds as genre ghosts. Addressing such haunting histories, Michalinos Zembylas (2013) in *Pedagogies of Hauntology in History*

²² Notably, this work is limited by its concentration on the impacts of Western representations of queer life upon the imaginations. More work should be done to take into account how non-Western and transnational perspectives disrupt or even reinforce the workings of such genre ghosts.

Education invites educators “to welcome the ghosts of the disappeared — and thus say ‘yes’ to an admittedly difficult past” (p. 83). For him, to invite specters is not merely to recognize that the past exists; it “is to conjure a future” open to radical potentials of that which is “representable and that which is unspeakable,” and by doing so, educators might understand “historical representation of disappearance and mourning as promise for a different future” (p. 83). Following Zembylas, to live with ghosts and the feelings they elicit forges a pathway between the living and the dead. For queer educators, it creates a means to feel backwards towards histories that hurt and, in so doing, provides hermeneutical resources for imagining alternate futures and composing them in pursuit of a more just representational landscape; one need only learn to live with the ghosts that haunt us.

Similar to Coyote, Helen also encountered challenges when composing her “time restory” (Figure 5.2 below), specifically as she attempted to write happiness into the past. While Coyote espoused frustration at their incapacity to compose happy queer endings and at their lack of awareness thereof, Helen did recognize genre ghosts at work while composing her “time restory,” and she was able to draw upon them to satisfy her affective desires. Unwilling to write a traditional happy ending, she engaged, however, in *critical realist uptake* to represent the past in ways that were personally sustaining—such is an exercise of affective power. Reformulating her originary story into a ten panel picktochart, Helen recontextualizes her painful history of domestic abuse into the queerphobic context of the 1945 United States. She explains:

I was originally going to pick the early 1900s, which was when lavender marriages were a thing. It was basically in a time before women were thought to experience sexual attraction, so lesbians really thrived in secret... That was originally what I wanted to do, was restory it in that time, and have it end in a place where, when it was abusive and didn't go bad, there was no recourse because I was alone and no one could know, type of thing.

Then I ended up choosing 1945, I think, partially because I was just in a worse head space than when I had originally chosen 1920. I wasn't in a, "Let's make everything happy," head space. I was in a, "Everything sucks and I want to cry," head space when I wrote that.

(PSTI20190501)

Helen's restorying process reveals a complicated relationship between realist accounts of the past and her affective needs in the present. Originally intending to set her "time restory" in the early 1900s, Helen recognized the genre ghosts at work, and accepting their invitation, she then shaped her story to "end in a place where, when it was abusive and didn't go bad, there was no recourse." Listening to the call of the dead, Helen shaped her restory around perceived historical realities such as lavender marriages, perceptions of asexuality for queer women, and lesbian social erasure. However, to call upon these painful aspects of history did not result in an unhappy ending, for Helen: "in 1920, I think that it would have ended in a way that was happy" (PSTI20190501). Representing the pains of queer history, Helen's imagined composition recognized the presence of genre ghosts, drawing upon them to imagine an ending that would have been, for her, happy.

This case invites a rethinking of how happiness functions in the composing process, particularly as it relates to genre. Helen's imagined "time restory," steeped in realist elements of queer history, raises the question of what does it mean, when happiness is found in narratives that are seemingly unhappy? Reframing lesbian erasure, Helen reimagined a past in which "lesbians thrived in secret" and in which the domestic

abuse she recounts in her originary story “didn’t go bad.” While the exact meaning of not going bad remains unclear, what is clear is that, for Helen, her original intention was to recount a story that “makes everything happy,” yet this happiness is one in misalignment with those happy endings defined by Sara Ahmed as *happy heterosexuality*. As Ahmed explains, narratives—like genres—accumulate emotions; however, emotions are shaped by the social worlds that give them meaning, and for narratives defined by happy endings, those meanings have been tied, nearly invariably, to stories in which happiness is achieved through alignment with heteronormative values.

Helen’s story, however, circumvents such happy heterosexuality, recognizing in the genre ghosts that haunt her, a resource for imagining and composing new narratives, and these narratives, predicated on the uptake of realist elements in her “time restory,” allowed queerer forms of happiness to accrue.

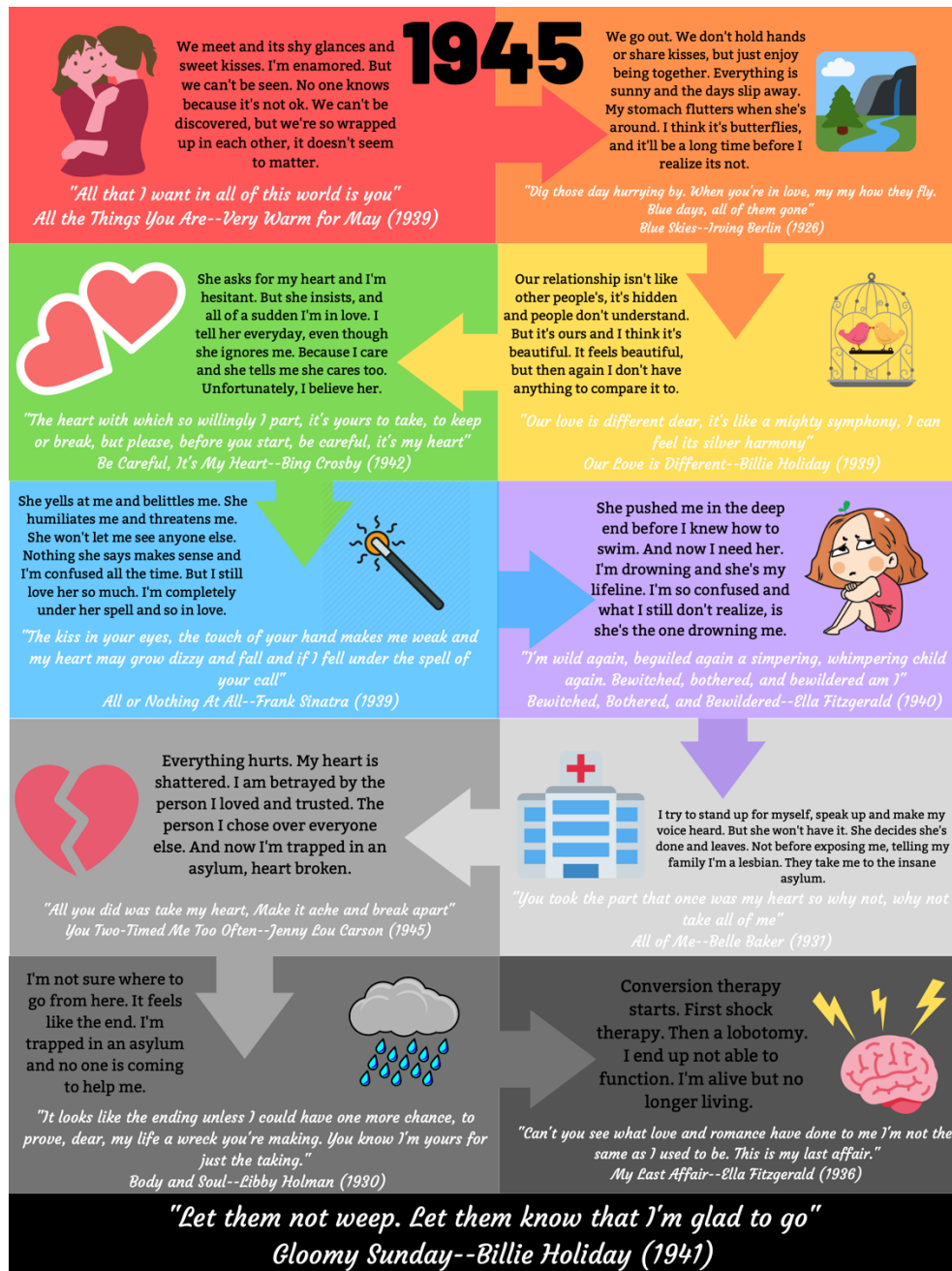


Figure 5.2. Helen's "Time Restory"

Infused with realist elements of queer history, Helen's "time restory" centers lesbian existence, doing so in challenge to the destorying of queer women, their sexuality, and the happiness of unrecognized queer relationships (e.g., lavender marriages); however,

differing from the 1920s context imagined, Hellen chose instead to set her story in 1945 in order to foreground unhappy elements of queer history, ones that mirrored her own unhappy mental state: “I ended up choosing 1945, I think, partially because I was just in a worse head space than when I had originally chosen 1920” (PSTI20190501). Recalling Ahmed’s figure of the *unhappy queer*, Helen harnesses genre ghosts and the representational dead to trouble the emotional accrual of happy heterosexuality, demonstrating how even painful representations can generate happiness, albeit a queer happiness largely rendered invisible within heteronormative frameworks for understanding emotions.

Describing her composing process, Helen, an unhappy queer, indeed, expressed wanting her “time restory” to reflect a headspace of “everything sucks and I want to cry.” Summoning genre ghosts, Helen began to draw upon (i.e., engage in uptake of) realist elements of queer history to shape her composition. Feeling backward towards histories that hurt, towards “darker” histories, she found in that composing process a queer form of happiness, otherwise unavailable. She explained,

1945 was when you could still be institutionalized for being gay...It was also when electric shock therapy was still used, so that was part of why I chose 1945 over a different time period, because I ended up making it a lot darker of a piece than it probably would have been... it would have ended sad anyways, in pain anyways, but in 1920, I think that it would have ended in a way that was happy, whereas this one ends in a way that is shock therapy, which turned a lot of people into vegetables at the end of the day.

(PSTI20190501)

For her, such representations engaged a desire for “the representations of queer women that are not always positive and favorable” and, in doing so, opened her to a queer form

of happiness. Not some “Pollyanna” happiness, as Coyote described, but a happiness that provided guidance for navigating a world in which queerness, in all its complexity, is so often erased from consciousness—destoried. Genre ghosts can provide us the signposts necessary to find a queer happiness our own; We need now only uptake the resources offered by those friendly ghosts of genres past and compose new representational landscapes in which queer death and queer happiness might coexist.

Critical Speculative Uptake: Drawing upon Genre Ghosts to Bridge the Imagination Gap

In this section, I focus on the development of one participant’s, Carlos’s, composing restorying process over the course of the *Restorying Painful Histories* project and pay specific attention to the increased inclusion of speculation and speculative literary elements—what I call *critical speculative uptake*—as they manifested in both his artifacts and enactments over time. A Mexican-American kindergarten teacher in New York City, Carlos serves as an illustrative case (Yin, 2018) for learning about the relationship between restorying and speculative genres as well as for learning how genre ghosts can enliven enactments of critical speculative uptake. To understand Carlos as a case, one must first know a bit more about him. In describing himself, Carlos self-identifies as a mixed, mestizo gay man, who to some is white-passing but, as his kids point out, speaks “Spanish really well” (PREI20181014). Working in the Bronx, while Carlos’s ethnic identity as a Mexican American matched the identity of many of his students, the racial dynamics that surround his often white-passing body differed greatly. Intersectional relations such as these surfaced in Carlos’s originary story—a realist

account of a family dinner that took place in Mexico—and were germane to his increasing uptake of speculation throughout the restorying process.

Accordingly, I present his painful history in its entirety as a start point from which to trace his evolution. To respect, as closely as possible, Carlos's intended meaning in all of his story artifacts, I preserve the original formatting, font, spelling, etc. His originary story reads as follows,

Growing up, I went to Mexico every summer. We were invited to eat at my great Aunt, Teresita's, house, along with her husband Pepe. They had made a fortune making clothes, specifically pajamas. Their house was a glass like mansion in the hills of Mexico City. As we arrived, an armed guard greeted us at the door with a smile and a meter long gun. My parents, my brother, my grandma, and several other people entered. I was maybe 18 years old. We were warmly greeted by my great aunt, got a tour of their place (it was my first time there), and were invited to sit down by the dining room (with a view of the pool and the rest of Mexico City). The food was excellent. It was probably chilaquiles. There was some banter, some rememberings of past times, and then began the talk about politics.

My great Aunt's husband, Pepe, began to mention how a person running for election was a "marica" (a fag). He would repeat it, laughing, with everyone else around me laughing along with him. I began to feel a certain way inside. I did not have words to describe it, a horrifying indescribable feeling. Not having words is one of the worst feelings I have ever felt. I begged my parents to go. They insisted that it would be rude to leave. But over the hour I began visibly convulsing, and we left on the pretext that I had a fever.

once outside, I felt I could finally breathe. We went to the local mall in Santa Fé. We went to a Starbucks, ordered a cappuccino. I remember looking at my dad through tears. I don't remember what he said, but I knew he was trying to console me. My mom didn't even acknowledge my sexuality at the time. I frankly don't remember the rest of that day. I might as well have blacked out.

Carlos's story braids together transnational histories of race, class, and queerness to recount a queerphobic experience that echoes countless realist accounts of queer life, ones whose affective import often seeps beyond the borders of representation. Notably, Carlos expresses the moment when language fails him, "I began to feel a certain way inside. I did not have words to describe it, a horrifying indescribable feeling." Visceral, the felt experience of this moment exceed his capacities to narrativize it. Carlos's encounter represents a narrative of family reject that, much like representations of queer death, haunted the imagination; Genre ghosts at work, Carlos's story further gestures

towards those specters' present absence, manifesting in the feeling that exceeded his capacity narrate it: "Not having words is one of the worst feelings I have ever felt." Despite a charmed childhood in which his sexuality was seldom considered (PREI20181014), in this moment, Carlos's experienced and subsequent narrative reinforced those painful metanarratives of queer life that continue to haunt.

Restorying, however, provided a means to think beyond the confines of the historical realism his life had become, by learning from the genre ghosts of the past. To do so, Carlos drew upon an often-overlooked aspect of restorying—its fundamental connection to speculation. Born of Critical Race Theory and fan studies (E. E. Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016a), restorying occurs when readers and writers "imagine themselves into stories," for in doing so, "they reimagine the very stories themselves" (p. 318). Restorying is thus an imaginative act that invites speculation, from writing stories otherwise to the integration of speculative literary features into realist accounts of the past. Accepting this invitation, Carlos feels backward (Love, 2007), finding in genre ghosts, a historical locus from which to reimagine the past: he learns to pass his painful history through the sieve of speculation. Responding to realism, Carlos engages in a critical speculate uptake that demonstrates the potential for the restorying process—that reading, responding, and rewriting of painful histories—to shape our composing practices through speculation, and such speculation proves a critical means of bridging the imagination gap.

To demonstrate this evolution, in the remainder of this section, I will move chronologically with Carlos, tracing the development of his restorying process as he

critically uptakes acts of speculation and speculative literary features to rethink and re-feel the realism of his painful history. Specifically, I will trace three aspects of his restorying process include Restorying Genre with Alternate Histories, Restorying Form through Translanguaging, and Restorying Life through Alteverses.

Aspect 1: Restorying Genre with Alternate Histories

While rich with affective intensity, Carlos's originary story proves quite conservative by other standards, espousing little imaginative play in terms of its formal literary elements and linguistic features. Written in prose, the piece is largely a direct recounting of experience; it is rendered in prose and occurs exclusively in English, despite Carlos's everyday translanguaging practices. Such conservativeness changed quickly, however, as Carlos embarked in the restorying process and encountered a wide array of literary forms, formats, and styles of writing in both our shared readings and in the sharing of our restories. Leading up to the composition of his "time restory," for instance, we discussed Gabby Rivera's (2017) comic book, *America Vol. 1* and Anna-Marie McLemore's (2018) short story "El Bajío" (See Chapter 4 for an in-depth discussion of McLemore's text). While the comics format proved challenging for Carlos, both reading (S1A20181102) and composing it (PSTI04302019), McLemore's work of magical realism invited Carlos to engage in what I refer to as *critical speculative uptake*—the uptake of speculation and speculative literary features within one's composing practice. Encountering this mentor text, Carlos began to play with language, weaving English and Spanish together in ways that mirrored McLemore's own usage of Spanish in "El Bajío" and, furthermore, his prose shifted from descriptive accounts to a

more novelistic and multimodal literary styles. For instance, in his first restory, his “identity restory” (see Figure 5.3 below), Carlos composed a three-panel comic in which the dialogue and narration occurred completely in Spanish.



Figure 5.3. Carlos’s “Identity Restory”

His “time restory” however, provided the clearest early example of speculative uptake. In this restory, Carlos reimagined his painful history to take place sometimes between the late 19th century and 1920s Mexico, in which discussions of communist revolution ruled the day (PSTI20190430); Steeped in formality, his restory opens with horse drawn carriages, butlers, and his great aunt’s mansion and, following a formal welcome into their home, he encounters his great uncle who says:

“¡Que gusto verlos, Carlos!”
 “Igual, Pepe.”
 “¿Me permite sentar?” asked my mom
 “Claro, señora, por favor.”²³

²³ So nice to see you, Carlos!
 Same to you, Pepe
 May I sit down? *Asked my mom*
 Of course, madame, please.

We all took a seat. Dinner was a plate of duck with roasted vegetables and exotic spices. I was also promised something called an “hamburguesa”²⁴ if I behaved myself.

Dinner proceeded. The talk turned to politics. My great uncle, Pepe, began complaining about this local politician. Jus the standard banter and complaints, he’s of the people, that they believe in this thing called “igualdad”.²⁵

After dinner, we had a pleasant game of backgammon. It was nice.

While touchstones of Carlos’s original narrative remain—he attends a lavish family dinner party in which political talk ensues—the ending provides a pronounced shift from his originary story; in lieu of an abrupt departure, tears of anguish, and high affective intensity, the narrative concludes “not with a bang, but with a whimper” (Eliot, 1925). Concluding the piece, Carlos writes simply, “It was nice.” When I asked Carlos, why he chose to compose his restory’s ending in this way?, he responded:

Carlos like I grew up not knowing, not having a word to describe [queerness] until the end of high school, right? And, in our day and age, I didn't have a word. I mean I can just imagine... Like 1920s, late 19th Century Mexico, would I even be considering it, which was the drive of the time of the story. Like I don't even talk about it. Like it just like, yeah, it happened. My uncle wasn't using the expletives.

Josh Ah, because that word didn't exist in that way.

Carlos Right.

Josh Because that term would not have existed in that way in that time.

Carlos None of my uncles were open. I feel it was much more likely to be called a Communist... I had a very limited understanding of revolution in Mexican history. So that's just what's like in my head.

(PSTI04302019)

²⁴ Hamburger

²⁵ Equality

Drawing upon “a very limited understanding” of late 19th and early 20th century Mexico, Carlos composed his time restory to account for conceptual absences in the imagination, repositioning the destorying of queer life as a means to circumvent an unhappy queer ending. By isolating a linguistic gap in the imagination—“not having a word to describe [queerness]”—Carlos transformed that gap into a locus for speculation, for re-imagining the past and his restory into a narrative that was nourishing or reparative in the present (for more on repair see chapter 6). As Angel Matos (2019) describes, “fictional representations of the past... [can] enable more egalitarian, open, and emotionally nourishing ways of thinking about the world we inhabit in the present, and the queer futures that have yet to arrive” (p. 33). I contend that Carlos’ “time restory” functions as one such fictional representation of the past, one that is, for him, personally nourishing as it rewrites the familial conflict of his painful history in pursuit of a past that would have been otherwise. Such is the invitation of the restorying process to speculate other narratives into existence.

Engaging in such speculation was not, however, mere happenstance, for Carlos’s uptake is a critical one that stems from encounters with YA literature rife with speculative literary features. In *America, Vol 1*, Carlos encountered a Latina lesbian superhero, America Chavez, who was herself an identity restory, a reimagining of Captain American from a white cis male to that of queer woman of color. Likewise, “El Bajío” uses magical realism to explore queer of color and trans life as well as the power of emotion to alter reality; for instance, in this world the protagonist’s anger materialize as pain that strikes at the bodies of the story’s antagonists. While Carlos’s critical uptake

of speculation literary features is a bit more demure in this early restory—to be clear he was more so writing in a general speculative modality—he does, nonetheless, infuse speculative elements into his realist account of the past—into a revolutionary history that rendered his painful history free of overt queerphobia. While on one hand, such a representation might be read as destorying the realism of Carlos’s queer life, I want to propose instead a different reading of Carlos’s restory, one only made possible by critical speculative uptake. For speculation—an imagining toward otherwise—is only made possible through a recognition of the reality of the here and now; For Carlos, such a recognition occurs, by virtue of the genre ghosts that manifest in and through his painful history, and the realism of that history “sticky” with pain can never be erased (PSTI20190430). He knows that queerphobia exist in his own painful history, and by recrafting that narrative, he is not erasing or destorying it; he is exploring the imaginative potentials (affective potentials) of otherwise, and these only become otherwise because the originary story, his painful story exists and is recognized.

Reimagined through speculation, that realist history of revolutionary Mexico shaped his composition of an alternate history, which, Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016) define as “a speculative genre [that] features stories that have an identifiable point of divergence from the history of our present reality” (p. 318-319). While the scale of many alternate or counterfactual histories operates at a global level—for example, what would happen if Nazi’s won World War II²⁶—Carlos’s restory, while more limited in scope, draws

²⁶ This narrative has become a trend in contemporary Young Adult literature and film.

equally upon speculation to rewrite realist accounts of history. Reimagining his originary story, Carlos's alternate history brings realism and speculation into contact, "holding" them together through critical uptakes which "enable meanings that are made possible from that set of relations" (Bawarshi, 2016, p. 246). Expanding his meaning-making potentials, Carlos's critical speculative uptake, as evinced by the creation of an alternate history, demonstrates a means to bridge gaps in the immigration, through the disruption of calcified genres—and all this for critical purposes.

A present absence, queerness in his composition remains present even as it is seemingly concealed in the speculative past. Counterintuitive, Carlos's removal of the slur "marica" did not, however, erase his queerness during the composing process, nor did his queerness fade away as he shared his story in sessions and in his post-interview. Written for queer audiences, Carlos demonstrates how restorying, as a composing process of reading, responding, and writing, allows queer representation to function differently. Tethered to an originary story of queerphobia, his queerness, while not explicitly represented in his "time restory," remains, a ghostly present absence that opens a new set of relations and potential social actions that hold critical import. Linking text with life, Carlos's "time restory" both disrupts and expands realist accounts of queer life, by infusing speculation within a text that, throughout our project always remained anchored to that originary story. Reorienting power, such uptakes hold vast critical potential for expanding composing practices invigorated by shifting cartographies of the colonized imagination (for more on this see chapters 2 and 4). These points are further emphasized

in Carlos's more explicit critical speculative uptake in subsequent restorying sessions, ones predicated upon continued encounters with speculative YA mentor texts.

Aspect 2: Restorying Form through Translanguaging

In our 3rd session: "Restorying Mode," Carlos continued to draw from our shared readings as mentor texts through which to compose stories that "resist harmful and exclusive cultural ideologies" through critical speculative uptake (Messina, 2019, p. 152). Building from a rich conversation around our shared text, the film adaptation of the *Miseducation of Cameron Post*, participants were to engage in transmedia storytelling, by shifting the primary modality of their originary story. Carlos, however, did not do this in a straightforward manner, choosing instead to restory the form of his painful history from prose to poetry. As he explains, "I considered the images and just making a collage, and again I don't have time." A busy teacher, Carlos perceived the request to shift mode as a time intensive one and thus opted to follow inspiration and restory in a different way: "I was walking around and it started formulating in my head on my way to work, and I was like this is what we're going to do. I just wrote." (PREI20181018). Accordingly, his "mode restory," while not overtly a reimagining of mode, revealed another potential form of restorying—restorying form—and furthermore, demonstrated the capacity for the restorying process to seep into daily life and thus shape the quotidian imagination towards new critical vistas. He writes:

Casa de la mariquita²⁷

Walking up steps
Rifle in my face
A house made of glass
Ya llegamos²⁸

An open table
Seating for twenty
No room for maricas²⁹
Except if your name is María
Entonces está bien³⁰

Pero you think he's a marica?³¹
What do you mean?
Pues I'm a marica³²
No soy María
Soy Carlosita³³

Keep your hollow enchiladas
Prefiero los de pollo³⁴

Walking down the steps
A house made of glass
Shattered
Ya nos vamos³⁵

While Carlos's poetry holds myriad critical implications, I will focus on two instantiations of critical speculative uptake that challenge damaging cultural ideologies: his superheroic happy endings and his inclusion of translanguaging.

²⁷ House of the Little Faggot

²⁸ We arrived

²⁹ Faggots

³⁰ Then it is ok

³¹ But you think he's a faggot

³² Well, I am a faggot

³³ Changed to preserve Pseudonym. Original lines has 3 syllables

³⁴ I prefer those with chicken

³⁵ We're leaving/we leave

Noticeably, the endings to Carlos's story and restories have varied greatly, from tearful, to nice, and now to shattering. As he writes, "Walking down the steps / A house made of glass / Shattered / Ya nos vamos." Stark, this ending concludes with a sense of empowerment born of the supernatural. Like a scene from a superhero blockbuster, the poem concludes as Carlos—and presumably his family—walk down the steps of the glass house—that locus of his painful history—and the house shatters. Acts of supernatural power, such as this one, constitute a "nonrealist literary device" (Schalk, 2018) that demonstrates speculative genres at work and, for Carlos, represents the most overt inclusion of critical speculative uptake; integrating nonrealist literary elements into his restories offered him a way of thinking and feeling differently with his own painful history. Describing the ending to "Casa de la mariquita," he explains, "That's kind of what I want, what I wish I would have said" (PSTI20190430). A locus of contemplation, as this example reveals, restorying's speculative underpinnings began to appear more overtly in Carlos's restories, instantiating themselves as evidence of imaginative play unfettered from the tacit dictates that shaped his earlier writings: For example, he did not feel constrained to restorying only mode, despite the instructions for the writing task, and chose instead to explore the speculative pathways opened to him by an inspired imagination.

Another pronounce feature of Carlos's "mode restory" is his use of translanguaging, another instantiation of critical speculative uptake that is, indeed, speculative. In a world dominated by English monolingualism and the white listening subject (Flores & Rosa, 2015), to position translanguaging as a form of critical

speculative uptakes is not to assert such practices as merely speculative features of life but is, instead, to spotlight imagining otherwise towards alternative forms of language as a vital means to circumvent the continued dominance of certain literary forms—for example the Western privilege of traditional English writing.³⁶ As Bawarshi explains, a “translingual orientation—with its focus on temporality, movement, and negotiation, with its view of language boundaries as porous and always emergent, always becoming” (p. 243) opens genres studies to an analysis of the histories and ghosts that shape both artifacts and enactments (Dryer, 2016) and thus might challenge the linguistic dominance of certain literary forms in often invisible ways.

In Carlos’s poem, the boundaries between English and Spanish beautifully collapse, allowing for a fluid movement between languages that was, on the one hand, absent from Carlos’s originary story and, on the other, bounded within quotations in his “time restory.” I want to suggest here that this inclusion of translanguaging in Carlos’s composition is indicative of shifting conceptions relative to his enactment of the restorying process. Namely, for him, restorying as an accruing genre invites speculation, both as built into restorying as a theory (E. E. Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016a) and as interwoven with this dissertation’s research design: for instance, most YA mentor text espoused some speculative literary element³⁷. Describing his decision to translanguage in his poem, Carlos explains,

³⁶ For the purposes of this chapter, hegemonic conceptions of “appropriate” academic English will be considered a formal feature of certain literary forms. These are understood to be steeped in whiteness, among other forces that have led to hegemonic linguistic norms.

³⁷ This was largely unintentional, but I believe was invited by the theory of restorying itself, which I contend is undergirded by speculation.

Yeah that poem was just like I wrote it. I mean I read a little bit about writing and symmetry...And I dabbled with it in the past, but not in poetry sense, but like prose. But I'm like oh, I like poetry...Ky [Carlos's boyfriend] was telling me it's a lot more about structure. He said it affects how you feel and the idea that you, they can interpret it many ways is kind of the point. So I was like okay, I felt really free to like do it. I didn't think of rhyming words and feel free to go between English and Spanish. No problem.

(PSTI20190430)

While Carlos's use of translanguaging in life is by no means speculative—he actively shifts between English and Spanish in everyday speech—the instantiation of those practices as textual features speaks to a certain uptake of speculation invited throughout the restorying process. By encountering and discussing speculative YA fiction as well as other participants' restories and by engaging in a composition process of his own, Carlos's conceptions of genre begin to decalcify, and he finds a wider range of possibilities for his composing practices. Composed halfway through our project, "Casa de la mariquita" demonstrates the value of experiencing the restorying process over time; how it invites one to reimagine experiences that, in turn, extend to more formal literary features such as genre and form. For Carlos, restorying provided a means to re-present the queerphobia experienced in his painful history, and through the instantiation of critical speculative uptakes of literary elements in his restories (artifacts), he reveals a shift in mindset around his composing practice (enactments). Moving towards more speculative modalities of writing—as evidenced by his expanding use of form and translanguaging practices—Carlos demonstrates the power of the imagination, to fill in and extend beyond representational gaps in childhood. And these are just the beginning of Carlos's speculative narratives.

Aspect 3: Restorying Life with Alteverses

As the project progressed, Carlos' relationship to imaginative play and speculation continued to evolve, becoming most pronounced in his final composition, his "place restory." Based upon our shared reading "forever and always by your side," a piece of fanfiction posted on Wattpad and written by a young adult, this restory was, as Carlos described, "the most whimsical and most basic of them, but it was funny" (PSTI20190430). Charged with creating an alterverse, he decided to restory his painful history within one of his favorite fantasy games, World of Warcraft (WOW); specifically, he chose to set his restory within the raid of Karazhan—a high level Player vs Environment (PVE) narrative offshoot in which groups of online players work together to take over the virtual environment of the tower of Karazhan. For Carlos, this fantastical environment was an invitation to restory: "the more I thought about it, the more I started laughing because Karazhan was basically the abode of this crazy powerful ex-wizard. And it made me think of my uncle...who's a crazy-powerful businessman, who lives in a glass house, and it's like he lives in Karazhan." Inspired by the parallels, Carlos decided to raid Karazhan in his restory because it too features "a dining scene that goes wrong." Restorying his realist history within a WOW-inspired alterverse, Carlos in his final restory, composes yet another speculative ending—a perhaps happy ending—in which he confronts the host of that dinner party, Prince Malchezzar, whom Carlos calls "the ghost of homophobia" (PSTI20190430).

Mixing narrative prose with web images from the raid, Carlos's multimodal "place restory" was as follows:

Alternative Universe Restory

I picked up my stave. My band of fellow adventurers were preparing to dine at the Vault of Heteronormative Tears. It's where my great aunt and uncle lived. Here's a picture of their abode:



We entered and immediately were met with a beautiful dining hall.



Curiously, no one was there. Well I thought there wasn't anybody. All of a sudden, these ghosts came up, and my great aunt and uncle were nowhere to be found.



All of a sudden, the ghost of homophobia came out of the ghost's bodies. My fellow adventurers and I were at the ready, and we battled:





Finally, the ghost of homophobia fell, and we proceeded to have our own dinner party.



It was fabulous.

Fabulous, indeed, Carlos's final restory demonstrates clear uptake of speculative literary features, from the fantastical setting of Karazhan, to a narrative structured around fantastical quests, to WOW characters, ghosts, and the ghastr³⁸ of homophobia. These features pervade his alterverse, one in which he as a high-level mage wields magic. As opposed to his other restories, Carlos in this restory directly confronts the anti-queer sentiments of his painful history— embodied in the ghastly figure of Prince Malchezzar—and, importantly, he defeats them: “the ghastr of homophobia fell, and we proceeded to have our own dinner party.” Furthermore, Carlos does so, while also preserving his family life; as he writes, “All of a sudden, these ghosts came up, and my great aunt and uncle were nowhere to be found.” Specters of homophobia, these ghosts are figures of realist pasts, that allow Carlos to engage critically with the true antagonists of queer life—queerphobia—defeating them to fantastical success. A reclamation, this happy ending represents a long journey, from the painful realist account of his originary story, to continued integration of speculation into his early restories, to this final composition of high fantasy, speculative fiction. Espousing a progressive critical uptake of speculative literary features, Carlos demonstrates a valuable invitation of the restorying process, to imagine wildly, far beyond the imagination gaps of childhood.

³⁸ Per Carlos, ghastr is a term of origins unknown. As discussed in his post-interview, Carlos wasn't sure if the term was an unintended neologism—a combination of ghost and ghastly—or if it might have originated from some other source. For example, ghastrs are antagonist, mob like creatures in Minecraft, a popular 3D sandbox video game.

Critical Speculative Uptakes in Life

Interwoven with his composing practices, restorying and critical speculative uptake reached, for Carlos, beyond the written page, ushering speculation into enactments both in life and his teaching. As he explains in his post-interview, “I think overall the idea of restorying is a very transportable idea that I’ve been trying to play around with my kids and my families even if I don’t name it a restory.” Excited to learn about restorying’s reach beyond the *Restorying Painful Histories Project*, I asked him if he would share an example. In response, he told me the story of Kelly Gene (pseudonym), a kindergartener who “used to really struggle with personal space” (PSTI20190430). Using both composing tasks (i.e., drawing) and a mentor text, *Personal Space Camp*, that asked Kelly Gene to consider proximity and perspective, Carlos asked her to restory a different perspective, to imagine how others might experience personal space: “after I read that book I had her make a very simple version of it, of like what would your personal space camp be like? And so she rewrote about an incident with a child earlier... How would she do it instead.” Instructing her to reimagining the story, Carlos infused restorying and critical speculative uptake into his teaching practice to encourage body autonomy amongst his kindergarteners, and now, as Carlos explains, restorying has become “a starting point in many ways for me” (PSTI20190430).

Opening new imaginative vistas, Carlos’s encounters with speculative genres invited a reimagining of past pain and present pedagogy. Beyond his work with kids, Carlos also recounted composing restories in his head. For instance, once when a parent

accused him of being racist for not providing students with homework, he shared how the restorying process allowed him to gain a new perspective on the situation:

The story in my head was these kids are having their souls crushed by this homework but talking to her, I realized that she didn't really care that it didn't help her child learn more, it was more like her child wanted to emulate her older brother...so now, I do have a new, I guess you could say story in my head of what homework is about, like you are restorying homework.

(PSTI20190430)

Excitingly, Carlos is an illustrative case of how restorying over time resulted in a critical speculative uptake that branched into life and pedagogy, shaping his engaged with students and parents. Such outcomes demonstrate restorying's potential for teaching and learning, to open teachers to more speculative modes of pedagogy that, hold at their core, the question of: what if? however, such speculation does not come without concerns. Noticeably, the translinguaging practices infused within Carlo's poem are absent from his final restory. Such an absence raises questions regarding speculative genres relationships to Western literary traditions invested in monolingualism: how might even critical uptake reinforce inequity? And, furthermore, how might whiteness cling to genres in ways that limit imaginatively possibilities for composing? Carlos as an illustrative case thus provides measured hope for using restorying to teach critical speculative uptake, a means of drawing upon speculative genres to shape thoughts, actions, and composing practices (both artifacts and enactments) towards more just representational landscapes that exist just over there, on the horizon.

Conclusion: Restorying Genres of Queer Life

Spent with ghosts, this chapter has explored the question, “do queer people need happy endings?” While yes serves as an easy and obvious answer, the politics surrounding such happiness is not so clear. As Coyote illustrated, happiness is a concept precluded from many realist accounts of queer life in the past, so much so that to imagine such happiness in the present often slips beyond conscious possibility. Precluded by that *realist feel*, happy endings for queer life can and are nonetheless being writing, and adolescent literature is proving a particularly, powerful psychic space for queer adults to restructure imaginations build around representational absence. However, such restructuring must not come at the cost of the queer past. As Coyote warns, “there’s a queer imaginary in the future where you don’t think about your past...and so a lot of times I feel like queer people are told to disregard their past and think about it in terms that are behind you” (POSTI20190506). This caution is one to which, *genre ghosts* responds. Recognizing genre ghosts at work, Helen demonstrates how they invite a critical uptake of realist pasts, of painful histories constituted by queerphobic experiences, that might be used to reframe happiness altogether. Moving happiness outside of heterosexual norms creates space for unhappy queer endings that can be satisfying for queer readers and writers. Finally, this chapter has, by positioning Carlos as an illustrative case, revealed the potential of the restorying process to encourage *critical speculative uptake*. Overtime, restorying and the speculation it invites can seep into life, shaping composing practices and pedagogies in order “to represent a world not restricted by our contemporary racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, and classist realities” (Schalk,

2018, p. 21-22). To realize such worlds, first, the representational landscapes of the imagination must change; they must be informed by ghosts of the past that teach us how to speculate toward futures that might nourish various genres of queer life.

To conclude this chapter, I want to end with words from Margarita, a queer Latinx and non-binary individual, whose words further demonstrate the speculative potential of restorying, to reimagine, not merely the past, but also the future in ways that, as my final chapter explores, can have reparative effects. They share,

Imagine a school where all of us taught together. I just have this ... I'm able to imagine that now, being in a group of queer educators as being able to imagine that maybe at some point I can work in a school where there's queer and trans educators that are a majority.

(POSTI20190502)

These are the speculative worlds we must fight to realize in the present.

CHAPTER 6: RESTORYING TO REPAIR: READING ORIENTATIONS TO PROMOTE COUNTER-CRITICAL LITERACY

We do not escape relations of power; we never do. We are always embedded in them. We may make progress...but at best we bring about a new condition that will itself need to be reassessed and reexamined, so that we can understand how power recirculates.
(Harcourt, 2018, p. 13)

Diversity is often imagined as a form of repair, a way of mending or fixing histories of being broken. Indeed, diversity enters institutional discourse as a language of reparation; as a way of imagining that those who are divided can work together; as a way of assuming that “to get along” is to right a wrong.
(Ahmed, 2012, p. 164)

What does it mean to read critically? Certainly, as proposed by scholars of critical literacy, critical readings entail an engagement with power, yet as theorist ranging from Marx, to Foucault, to Janks have asserted, power is a multipronged, many-formed thing. How critical then can any singular form of reading be? Might multiple forms of reading reveal to readers a wider array of power’s influence, how it animates word and world? To illustrate this point, I begin this chapter—admittedly a more experimental chapter—by placing two critical readings side-by-side. I first explicate Kim’s “skeptical critique” (Felski, 2015) of the short story “El Bajío” and then compare it with Margarita’s “reparative reading” (Sedgwick, 2003), doing so to advocate for a wider array of critical reading practices, what I refer to as *reading orientations*, that might expand both the purview and impact of critical literacy practice and scholarship.

During our discussion of our restorying time mentor text, Anna-Marie McLemore’s “El Bajío” (also discussed in chapter 4), Kim, a queer/bisexual Chicana,

expressed a wide array of responses to the text with each being anchored in the same affective and methodological disposition: skeptical critique. To demonstrate, Kim's skepticism and critique manifest most saliently in her discussion of the ethics of representation; she explains, "I don't know anything about [McLemore's] ethnicity or anything, but I read her as being white, or she's a Latina...I don't know how much that matters, but I was just like, okay. It felt a little bit like exoticization of the protagonist, because it was like, she was like, lovely brown skin and I just didn't know where that was coming from. I liked it a lot but I think it was the juxtaposition of the very beautiful, pale, white..." (S2B20181203). Incisive, Kim's comments demonstrate a skeptical approach to the text that manifested in a trenchant critique of the works racial and body politics. Recognizing the potentials of this text to propel eroticization of brown bodies, Kim calls into question the author herself, questioning McLemore's capacity to represent Latinx queer experience. Regardless of McLemore's author's note, in which they self-disclose as a queer Latinx individual, Kim's skeptical critique demonstrates the ways in which reading reveals power—in this case, the power of representation to construct and to eroticize—and she does so through a reading orientation that has become the *sine qua non* of critical scholarship, skeptical critique (Felski, 2015).

In both comparison and complement, Margarita draws upon their own experiences as a Latinx queer nonbinary person to deploy an equally critical reading of "El Bajío" (for more, see chapter 4). Margarita's reading orientation, one couched in an affective disposition of repair, deploys a criticality not as easily recognized by critical scholarship. Adopting a different reading orientation to "El Bajío," Margarita engages in

a critical reading that reveals the potential of the text to fulfill a reparative function. They extoll,

I have never felt so comfortable with the text. There's a lot of words in Spanish that either this person is very fluent in Spanish or is native Spanish speaker. But not even just fluent in Spanish, but has a cultural understanding of Spanish, because the Spanish words were dropped in, just in the right place, where it would be the right time to ... that a native speaker would do, I felt. So, that was really powerful. It was a queer text. It was written by a queer Latinx person. All of it, I have not felt, ever, in my life...I loved it.

(S2A20181202)

Margarita's reading also evokes power—particularly the power to affect reader response of great intensity. As they explain, the use of Spanish language in conjunction with queer Latinx representation was, for them, “really powerful.” Distinctive from Kim's skeptical reading, Margarita's engagement with “El Bajío” might better be described as a “reparative reading” of the text (Sedgwick, 2003). Margarita's transaction with “El Bajío” transformed the text into an object of sustenance, that is to say, one that extends power back to the reader in the form of certain affects such as comfort, hope, or motivational charge that are, for that reader, reparative. Espousing a different orientation to McLemore's work, Margarita transacts differently with their text and, in doing so, renders visible a different form of power as well as its reparative impact. Such readings are necessary in critical work and gesture towards a much-needed expansion of critical reading practices in order to harness power outside that of the de facto reading orientation, skeptical critique.

Responding to that need, in this chapter, I propose a somewhat oblique critique of critical literacy. Not because I have lost faith in critical literacy as a project but, on the

contrary, because I believe that the future of literacy research must indeed be critical. A threat to such literacy's transformative potential, however, is the tacit acceptance of skepticism and critique as the default orientation of all critical reading practices; skeptical critique has naturalized itself as *the* means of reading texts critically and, by extension, as critical literacy itself (Felski, 2015). Imagining otherwise, I theorize a model of *reading orientations* to call attention to the need—and potential—of enacting alternative critical reading practices that might engage power differently. Merely a start, in this chapter, I focus on but one of many potential reading orientations, “reparative description,” by foregrounding post-interview data that positions restorying as repair. I then address the realities of pain that was, for participants, irreparable and argue for a communal model of testimony and witnessing to encourage reparative relations to pain. Finally, this chapter advocates for reparative reading practices as a means to address painful histories of social oppression, and for queer educators in particular, such critical reading practices might redress the wounds of queerphobia that persist in today's classroom-worlds and in the representational landscapes of the imagination.

Putting the Critical in Critical Literacy

As we know it today, critical literacy most commonly derives its formulation of “criticality” from the Frankfurt School—a group composed primarily of German thinkers who, convening in the early 20th century, deployed Marxian materialist analysis to combat fascism's growing grip on post-World War Europe. While foundational critical literacy scholars have well documented such origins (Luke, 2014; Vasquez, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019), they in tandem with a new wave of critical literacy researchers

(Thomas, Bean-Folks, Coleman, forthcoming) are also suggesting alternative histories of “criticality,” ones that root themselves in older genealogies of lives lived on the margins. Operating in that vein, this brief review of literature spotlights the role alternative genealogies might play in the cultivation of critical reading practices derived from yet unexplored streams of feminist, queer, and of color scholarship.

Reader Response for the 21st Century

Notably, central to Frankfurtian critical theory are commitments to reading practices steeped in a particular hermeneutics, in the orientation one adopts prior to and throughout transactions with texts. As proposed by Louise Rosenblatt (1988, 1995), the transactional approach to reading literature consists in adopting a stance, either efferent or aesthetic, that occurs prior to the act of transaction. Forming a continuum, Rosenblatt situates efferent and aesthetic stances in contrast to one another, with the former concerning itself—broadly—with the denotative valences of a text and the latter with more connotative association (i.e., “sensations, images, feelings, and idea” (p. 5)). For Rosenblatt, the adoption of a stance precedes textual transactions, delimiting how and what linguistic elements arrive in consciousness during a reading event: it “picks out elements that synthesize or blend into what constitutes ‘meaning’” (p. 4). Essentially, the stance one adopts prior to transacting with a text delimits what might be imagined and, by extension, felt as one reads. In essence, stance structures conscious storyworlds—what arrives to the reader in consciousness—and thus that reader’s responses to the text. Inherently affective, stances are vital to reading practices as they fundamentally shape the potential for critical engagement.

Such affectivity is, however, seldom considered in reading research, despite scholars' isolation of shortcomings in both Rosenblatt's model and its uptake in critical literacy research. Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016), for instance, draw attention to a needed rearticulation of reader-response theory to address the demands of a 21st digital world, by "restorying" single stories and single responses to literature. Similarly, Cynthia Lewis (2000) underscores Rosenblatt's failure to provide adequate attention to the social and politic dimensions of reading (i.e., context); She then goes on to address—albeit obliquely—the dangers of eliding or misplacing affect's role within the adoption of a readerly stance, which for her, has grave critical implications. Lewis explains:

I believe that the more we separate the aesthetic and... the interpretive or critical, the more we deny the possibility for a critical engagement that, in my view, can bring together the personal, critical, and the pleasurable. The terms efferent and aesthetic become problematic when they are set in opposition to one another, an opposition that Rosenblatt undeniably perpetuates in some of her writing.

(p. 255)

Per Lewis, Rosenblatt's alignment of the "aesthetic" with the pleasurable and personal precludes a critical engagement with literature. Rosenblatt's theory, as Lewis rightly describes, posits a false division between pleasure and other affective response to reading—ones that promise their own critical forms of textual transaction. Importantly, "efferent" forms of reading—positioned as stoic and thus critical—are in fact equally as affective as "aesthetic" reading stances, and each is imbued with its own potentials for pleasure, for personal connection, and for the articulation of power: what differs, however, is the tenor and intensity of those affects and, by extension, the style of critical reading they afford.

Lewis's critique spotlights how critical reading remains conceptually trapped, fixed to Enlightenment strivings for objectivity that hallmark traditional, foundationalist accounts of critical theory (Harcourt, 2018), and while such foundationalism has fractured under the pressure of post-structuralism, critical frameworks have, nonetheless, remained beholden to a predominant and nearly exclusive style of reading: *skeptical critique*. As Rita Felski (2015) deftly outlines in *The Limits of Critique*, critical theory has become synonymous with a singular "reading style," what she describes as a combination of *affective mood* and *method*³⁹ (i.e., reading orientation). For Frankfurtian critical theory, that reading style remains committed, on the one hand, to a "hermeneutics of suspicion" as the primary affective mood of reading (Ricoeur, 1970) and, on the other hand, to critique as the primary method of textual engagement. Taken together, mood and method provide a singular reading style or, in Rosenblatt's language, a stance that both precedes and ongoingly shapes a reading event. Whether style or stance, such a disposition functions as a "selective attitude, bringing certain aspects into the center of attention and push others into the fringes" (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 5): How then are critical reading practices limited by the adoption of but a singular stance and, furthermore, what critical potential lies in the cultivation of other ways of reading? An expanded approach to reading style—one that accounts for both affective mood and a wider array of reading methods—opens possibilities for mobilizing alternative critical reading practices in pursuit of engaging power otherwise, outside of the default stance of skeptical critique.

³⁹ Following Anker and Felski (2017), method refers to "the ways in which established practices of reading limit the inquiries, experiences, and insights available to the critic" (p. 15)

Critical literacy, in particular, stands to gain much from expanding not merely the analytic lens we use to read by but also the reading styles or stances we adopt prior to reading.

Critical Literacy's Critical Critique

Allan Luke (2014), for example, names critical literacy's "explicit aim" as "the *critique* [emphasis added] and transformation of dominant ideologies, cultures, and economies, institutions, and political systems" (p. 25), and indeed critique has been mobilized effectively to engage power as it relates to various settings (Comber, 2016; Janks, 2010; Lewison et al., 2002) and peoples (Bacon, 2017; Hermann-Wilmarth et al., 2017; Watson & Beymer, 2019). Yet as Latour presciently asked in 2004, "Why has Critique Run out of Steam?"; in a contemporary moment marked by mounting social injustice, why is critique undergirded with skepticism alone capable of engaging power in ways that realize educational justice? Perhaps it is time critical literacy scholarship expand its repertoires of sense making—our ways of reading the word and the world. To do so, however, we must first recognize the limitations of critique and skepticism as the primary reading orientation of critical projects.

Undoubtedly, critical literacy has and will continue to draw upon skeptical critique to thwart social hegemony's oppressive force in the lives of literacy learners across the globe, and rightly so. We must, however, acknowledge that skeptical critique is proven insufficient to enact the holistic "transformation" of Allan Luke's vision (2014). We as researchers, practitioners, and teachers of critical literacy have yet to achieve our just aims, for as Hilary Janks (2010) describes in *Literacy and Power*, in a

“peaceful world” (p. 203) we would not need critical literacy. We are, sadly, a world still desperately in need of critical literacy. “Intolerance and fear of the other” persist, granting “unequal access to resources” such that critical approaches to reading, writing, and transacting with texts remain of paramount importance (ibid). To pursue that peaceful world full of intersectional vibrancy, critical literacy is in need of an expanded range of critical reading practices—moods and methods—for engaging power through textual transaction, and as I will argue, by doing so we might then read the word in order to repair the world.

A Two-Part Counter-Critical Model of Reading

By extending conceptions of criticality, critical literacy can also extend its purview to engage a wider array of power. For this chapter, I will focus on but one sliver of such an expansion—critical reading practices that open up avenues for repair—by reconceptualization Rosenblatt’s transactional theory in light of Rita Felski’s and Bernard Harcourt’s respective calls for postcritical reading and counter-critical critique. In *The Limits of Critique*, Rita Felski (2015) proposes a “postcritical reading [as a model] interested in testing out alternate ways of reading and thinking” (p. 182). For her, this model foregrounds the diverse moods and methods available prior to and during any reading event and, importantly, is distinct from *uncritical* reading. Felski advances the “post” in postcritical to signal any attempted expansion of critical reading practices; this in contrast to calls for jettisoning critical frameworks all together. For her, a postcritical approach to reading does not “prescribe the forms that reading should take nor...dictate the attitude critics must adopt” (p. 173); it, instead, recognizes and expands upon

Frankfurtian criticality—and specifically skeptical critique—by emphasizing an attunement to context and readerly intention; it invites choice in textual interpretation that echo Rosenblatt’s evocation of readers adopting a stance prior to transactions between reader and text and, furthermore, emphasizes that each stance realizes distinct textual storyworlds in consciousness to which readers will then differently respond: In essence, different stances construct different texts that, in turn, reveal different responses and different forms of power at work.

Advancing postcritical reading, in this chapter, I propose a two-part model of critical reading—what I refer to as *reading orientations*—as a means of reconceptualizing Rosenblatt’s transaction theory as a form of postcritical reading and, by extension, “counter-critical theory.” As Bernard Harcourt (2018) explains, counter-critical theory is a “pure theory of relations of power in flux such that every critical unmasking forces us to reexamine the resulting redistribution of power relations” (p. 14). A natural extension of postcritique, counter-critical theory creates space for thinking around, through, alongside, and “beyond reason” (Janks, 2010)—in essence, beyond those rationalist paradigms that exclude the more murky levels of consciousness (and certainly affect) from critical literacy research and pedagogy. A counter-critical model of reading foregrounds the need for multiplicitious approaches to engaging power, particularly to move beyond the limitations of the rational: as Harcourt sagely advances, “Counter-critical theory must challenge the intolerable in these critical times, and, faced with the utter singularity of battle, it must respond in multiple ways” (p. 17).

Taking up the call for multiplicitious interpretation, I propose a two-part, counter-critical reading model of transaction theory that focus on the development of *reading orientations* prior to and during reading events. Drawn from Felski's (2015) "reading styles," my move to reading orientations emphasizes the phenomenological valence of reading as well as the capacities for "disorientations" (Ahmed, 2006) and changes in orientation to guide critical reading practices: *affective readings* (as proposed in chapter 4)—the reading of one's own affective response to a text—might reveal a needed orientational change, either prior to or during textual transaction, and such a change in orientation would reveal different forms of power at work in acts of interpretation. Rosenblatt asserts, for instance, that "essential to any reading is the reader's adoption, conscious or unconscious of a stance" (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 5). This language of stance resounds loudly in educational contexts and specifically in literacy studies (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), yet in a world unattuned to the affective valences of life, such a metaphor draws attention to the body and material world, in ways that deemphasize the more vague, capricious, and less visible aspects of reading (e.g., phenomenology and affect). A turn to reading orientations is thus a turn to that which remains largely unexamined in critical reading research, those "moods" and "methods" always at play and often invisible in moments of textual transaction.

Reading orientations is thus comprised of two primary axes—what I like to imagine as wheels connected, side-by-side (See Figure 6.1).

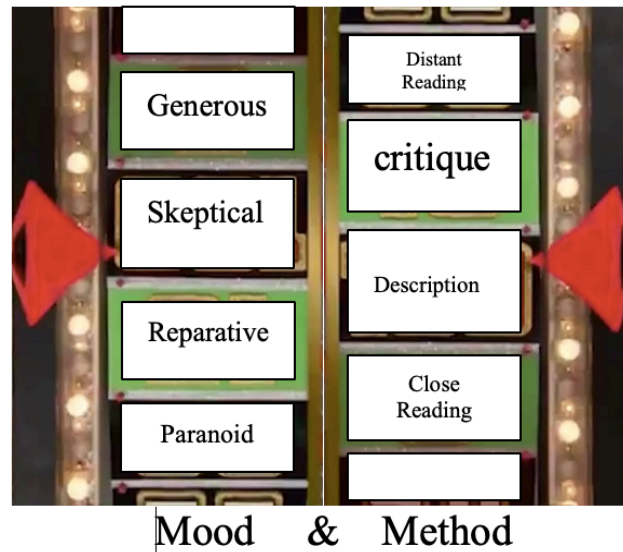


Figure 6.1. Two-Part Counter-Critical Model of Reading

Emphasizing their dynamic nature, this double wheeled model (think the Price is Right times two) is comprised of a “mood” wheel and a “method” wheel. Focused on the affective, the mood wheel foregrounds those valences of reading—feeling, sensation, affect, and emotion—that, while fundamental to any act of reading, are often relegated to only certain forms of reading (e.g., efferent, personal, etc.), if not elided all together. This might include skeptical, suspicious, paranoid, generous, or even reparative mood-alities of reading. The second wheel, equally as important and, furthermore, inextricable from the first, concerns itself with “methods” of reading (e.g., close, distant, or surface reading, thin vs. thick description, critique, etc.). Offering a nearly limitless combination of moods and methods, the development of this critical model does not, however, propose that anything goes, that any orientation to a text will result in critical outcomes. Instead, this approach asks researchers and educators to understanding the limitations of skeptical critique, the de facto reading orientation of today’s critical landscape, and to open critical

literacy research and pedagogy to the potentials of reading otherwise. It is time that we engage power differently, recognizing in the expansive combinations of mood and method a novel means of recognizing, engaging, and rearticulating power through the orientations readers adopt in transacting with texts.

Anticipating the no doubt “critical” assessment of my proposed model as expansive beyond the point of use, in this chapter, I want to demonstrate the potentials of but one reading orientation for enacting critical work in pursuit of engaging power otherwise. In this chapter, I will focus specifically on “reparative description,” a reading orientation that has a robust theoretical history in queer theory, affect studies, and the sociology of reading. In her iconic piece “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About you,” Eve Sedgwick (2003) contrasts the paranoia invited by a hermeneutics of suspicion with the critical potential of reparative reading practices. She explains that “In a world where no one need be delusional to find evidence of systemic oppression” (p. 125-126), reparative readings present a critical reading practice, both “additive and accretive” (p. 149), that “confer[s] plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer an inchoate self” (p. 149). Reparative reading is a practice for those who have experienced the wounds of history, those in search of a mode of relating with texts that provides, generates, and creates—that promises hope—to a would be reader, as opposed to, as Ellis Hanson’s (2011) describes, “simply revealing allegedly new and ever more insidious forms of abuse in rather unlikely places.”

Such a move to repair as an affective mood through which to orient one's reading couples nicely with the turn to alternative methods of humanistic inquiry incited by the so-called "method wars" (Anker & Felski, 2017). For the purposes of this chapter, I am turning specifically to "description," as method of critical reading, because of its usefulness in accounting for both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the power of social oppression in the lives of marginalized educators (Love, 2010, 2013; Marcus, Love, & Best, 2016). Furthermore, description provides a means to elude the skepticism that underpins ideological critique, while also emphasizing restorying's reparative potential. As Marcus, Love, and Best (2016) explain in "Building a Better Description," "The practice of description provides the material that gives future scholars...the opportunity to engage differently with their objects, and serves as a building block for extending the collective and networked aspects of scholarly work across time" (p. 4). Applicable to this project, description provides a tool for elucidating repair, its vague and even incomprehensible affects, by "attend[ing] to what eludes easy categorization and understanding" (Marcus et al., 2016, p. 11).

Accordingly, in the following section, I attend exclusively to post-interview data from the *Restorying Painful Histories* project in order to reveal how a descriptive account of reparative moments reveals power at work in the lives of queer educators and what a counter-critical approach to reading practices might offer critical literacy scholarship. Following narrative inquiry methodology (D. Clandinin, 2007), I approach these reparative accounts as both data and method. As descriptions of repair, the data I present here are derived from participants self-narrated accounts of reparative moments

throughout the project. Additionally, I adopt a reparative descriptive reading orientation myself, to demonstrate how such a counter-critical can reveal alternative forms of power at work. By showing reparative description as both data and as my own reading orientation, this chapter reveals the need for a wider array of reading orientations that combine alternative moods and methods in pursuit of an expanded critical project for literacy studies.

Describing Repair: On Using Thin Description

Experimental, I want to begin this section with data itself, a log or account of participant descriptions of reparative moments that occurred throughout the project. A block of text, this data simply catalogues how participants experienced repair. Atypical, presenting data in this way is intended to account for both the quantity and quality of descriptive data, while also offering up different means of revealing and engaging power. Furthermore, each participant will be cited but once—a stylistically unconventional approach to presenting data for APA. This choice is intended to invite a different form of reading from you, Dear Reader. I do not imagine one reading each word and line in the traditional Western reading style of top-to-bottom, left-to-right but, instead, moving swiftly across the page, dipping in and out of moments yet always encountering something that was, by my participants own descriptions, reparative. Following Marcus, Love, and Best (2016), organizing data in this way is an experimental attempt to take account of what is present, revealing the reparative aspects of the restorying project, as opposed to hunting for intentions and motivations that lurk below the surface of the text. Notably decontextualized, this approach is merely a first read that attempts to realize

reparative description as a counter-critical reading practice that invites alternative forms of organizing and analyzing data. Following this initial block of data, I will then reorganize and analyze that data to reveal reparative description's counter-critical features, and in subsequent sections, I will return these data to their contexts to provide a more robust account of how reparative power functioned through the *Restorying Painful Histories* project:

Adam (PSTI20190501): "an acceptance of that, this happened," "If you think about it and you actually learn from it, then you can go on and actually do things," "Use it as motivation," "that was kind of a good...like kind of giving me hope," "maybe things are changing for the better," "Things have definitely progressed in a positive way," "her priorities are very different than mine," "it brings sort of perspective to it, maybe things that I think are so important might not be," "it helped me really kind of piece everything together at the end," "There is some purpose to this. There is some helpful outcome," "I can take it and use it and learn from it rather than just not think about it," "Helped me come to terms with the experience and how I can use it to help others and myself," "It was nice to know that I'm not alone in feeling a lot of the different ways," "It's just nice to have people who understand," "I found the process that we took really helpful." **Margarita** (PSTI20190502): "I shared the poem...now I'm just sitting with it and holding it which is sometimes, that's all you need. That's enough validation of like some people are holding it." "any form of stability, even if it's like this, a project that's over time, is really just comforting," "the things that we have shared as a group have been, I had no idea other people were feeling this too," "I don't know, maybe I'm still healing," "It's been like narrative therapy," "When it's on paper and I've written it down or said it to people who are now witnessing that pain, it's like affirmation of hey, we're here." **Coyote** (PSTI20190506): "Honestly, borderline therapeutic," "I think as a writer it's important for me to think about things and the idea of restorying, I think, is significant but again, I guess just as a form of queer healing," "It forced me to confront it and think about it critically which at the time I did not do and I wanted to get past it and I think in that sense it got me to be honest about emotions," "There's also catharsis about it," "I feel like I got to vent about it for the first time, to be honest," "I feel better about that story and I feel better about processing it and I feel better just about like the whole" "I have comfort in how I tell the story," "If nothing else, I'm not afraid to talk about this story anymore" **Ari** (PSTI20190430): "It was kind of therapeutic to process this over and over again in different ways," "I think it definitely made me feel better," "Definitely felt like a more positive response to the story because it was like finding that teenage excitement when you don't." "Because I think to heal from trauma you have to understand where your trauma comes from." **Kim** (PSTI20190430): "I don't have to knit society back together. I can make my

own society, or I can just be okay at being outside of it all my life,' "Why are we trying to fit in?" "We can create our own sort of underground communities" **Helen** (PSTI20190501): "Part of what made it interesting, was it's just so different," "I read the first chapter. I was like "Oh my God." "Part of it is feeling like I'm not alone in my emotions," "I really liked that one. I got to build it around and highlight one of the songs that was and still is most impactful for me, and was consistently been one, a song that I have revisited for a year almost," "This one is much more empowering. They're both empowering, but I feel like this one focuses a lot less on the pain," "Both of them end on being stronger," "I liked that one because I got to re-write an event that had just happened," "A lot of pain has been elicited, and it's only been helpful," "It was not the healing that I was expecting," "So good, thinking about pain," "I do think that was helpful because it gave me control in a way that nothing else has." **Carlos** (PSTI20190430): "Very positive," "Positive in the sense of like meeting other queer people who are very open," "Restorying is a very transportable idea that I've been trying to play around with my kids and my families," "Restorying is a way to process trauma and so it was cool to bring it to my classroom," "it's one of the things you do, you remember how you heal, but you don't remember exactly what that's like," "Restorying gave me another chance to choose a different way to look at the stress," "I had to like revisualize the past and since I felt like I was there it was almost like a second opportunity to make up for that opportunity and growth," "it was reparative for me." **Claire** (PSTI20190430): "It was cool to meet other queer folks who are educators and to hear their stories," "The restories that we didn't even know, but to know of all these other possibilities, that was cool," "This gave me a chance to read for fun but then to also read to try and understand something further," "When I first saw it, I always just through of death. I was like, oh, because people were killed. Now I think it's...it's more," "The potential. The potential, but then also, the dynamics in it is just phenomenal," "Critically thinking about things and so I was like, wow, this is bringing me back," "The fact that I was able to discuss them in a queer setting with other queer and trans folks...I was like, wow, fuck yeah," "I think it's awesome. I'm excited knowing that my sister is reading these things. It's just cool," "Everyone should be fucking reading these books," "Reading it, one, it gave me joy," "A lot of us are just in constant survival mode...We literally have to keep going and I think this is, this whole thing, has reminded me of , wow, this, us taking this time is so fucking important," "I thought that that was cool."

As a reading practice, description seeks to take account of what is present, as opposed to attributing intention to a text based upon what a reader might discern. Accordingly, following Heather Love's recommendation, in the remainder of this section, I will read these data "closely but not deeply" (p. 381); that is to say, my readings will account for what these descriptions present as repair, while also denying the impulse to

attribute “richness” or human intention, feeling, or experiences to participants accounts. Counter-intuitive to my training as a humanist, adopting a reading orientation couched in reparative description impressed upon me the difficulty of accounting for power, particularly for those relations of power not readily visible based upon my critical training. Accordingly, through the organization of this text block, I realized the need to alter my treatment of data and my reading practices in order to account for how repair functioned as a counter-critical reading practice throughout the restorying process.

As Robin Wiegman explains, reparation in the Sedgwickian sense involves changing how one relates to an object of study. It involves “learning how to build small worlds of sustenance” (p.11) in which a reader confers love upon an object that, in turn, provides affirmation—positive affect—to the reader. Reading in this model forges a reparative relation between subject and object, between reader and text, in which both are transformed through the act of textual transaction. Accordingly, the reader who adopts a reparative “affective mood,” does so most often intentionally and in contradistinction to the default reading orientation of skeptical critique. A shift in reading orientation, to embrace repair as an “affective mood” is to confer “love” on one’s object (Sedgwick, 2003); it is to embrace what an object or text presents through “surface reading[s]” (Best & Marcus, 2009) and to forego the mining of a text’s metaphorical “depths” (Love, 2010). A turn to reparative reading is thus a choice to adopt an asset-based approach to texts, to recognizing what a text can offer to its reader and to the world, while also eschewing deficitized perspectives of textuality. Reparative readings thus find in text a

means to heal painful histories and to “cultivate a different present and future for the losses that one has suffered” (Wiegman, 2014, p. 11) .

Accordingly, to make sense of these object relations—how transactions are transformed by virtue of a readers “reading orientation” towards a given text—I reorganized the data to reveal which textual objects readers were transacting within in their descriptions of repair and, further, what affirmative or reparative affects surface through those transactions. To do so, as demonstrated in Table 6.1 (for the full table, see Appendix D), I created three primary columns. In the first labeled “Description of Repair,” I listed each of the sixty-seven quotes from the previous block of reparative descriptions on a row of its own. I then returned to the transcripts themselves and, based upon contextual discussion, determined the object which participants were describing—what they were imagining—as they uttered their description and created conceptual categories for those objects (e.g., “painful history,” “social progress”): these objects appear in column two. In the final column, I listed one primary, reparative affect that arose from that transaction between reader and object and, when possible, used an *in vivo* approach that attended as closely to their own descriptive language.

	DESCRIPTION OF REPAIR	OBJECT	AFFECT
1	an acceptance of that, this happened	Painful History	Acceptance
2	If you think about it and you actually learn from it, then you can go on and actually do things.	Painful History	Motivation
3	Use it as motivation	Painful History	Motivation
4	that was kind of a good...like kind of giving me hope	Social Progress	Hope

Table 6.1. Reparative Description Analysis Table

To account for descriptions of repair in such a way reveals a number of salient features of restorying itself and ultimately gestures towards alternative relations of power invited by adopting a wider array of reading orientations. Focusing on the three most recurrent objects, my subsequent discussion in this section will detail each in turn and will attend specifically to the reparative relations these descriptive accounts reveal. These three objects are: Restorying Process, Restories, and Painful Histories. (For a breakdown of the percentages and a graph of reparative objects please see Figure 6.2). Following a brief descriptive account of each object and its attendant affects, I present a brief analysis of their importance for considerations of power in relation to affect, the imagination, and affective reading.

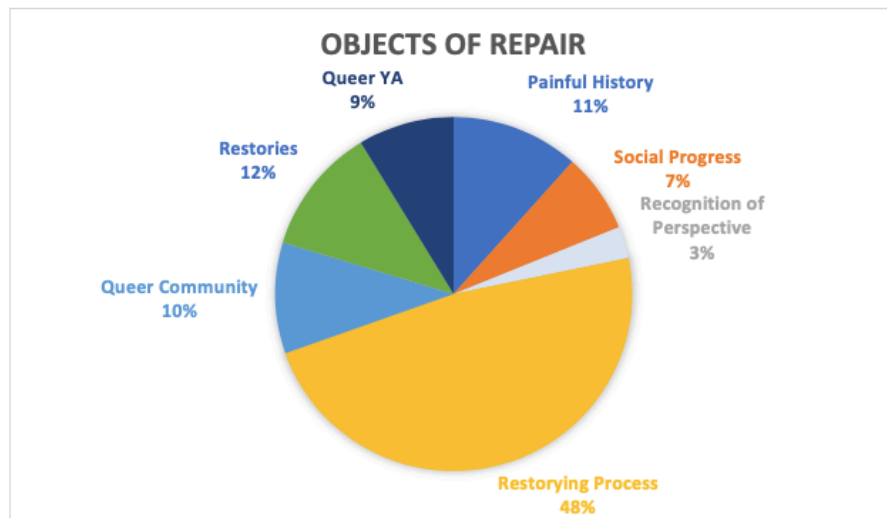


Figure 6.2. Objects of Repair

Restorying Process

Of the sixty-seven reparative descriptions recorded in the post-interviews, a resounding thirty-three or 48% of them espoused the restorying process itself as the object of repair. Encapsulating a number of codes, “restorying process” became a theme inclusive of storytelling, restorying usage, discussions of restorying, sharing restories, and the restorying project, and it elicited a wide array of reparative affects; these include helpfulness (4), comfort (2), healing (4), therapy (3), affirmation, emotional honesty, catharsis, preclusion of fear, feeling better, interest, goodness, sense of control, positivity, sense of potential (4), redemption, repair, and coolness. Varied, such affects indicate the vastness of the restorying process’s impact for addressing painful histories and foregrounds the capacity for stories—written, rewritten, and shared—to shift the very experience of power itself, how it is imagined and felt and, as one participant asserts, “control[led]” (Helen, PSTI20190501).

One of the first empirical studies to incorporate restorying (Stornaiuolo & Thomas, 2018; E. E. Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016b) as an *a priori* feature of the research design. Doing so has revealed the restorying process’s reparative benefits gestate, amplifying over time and with reinforcement through reading, writing, and discussion in community. For Margarita, restorying’s reparative features manifested in the creation of consistent space—a queer communal space in which to try out and share new narratives that pushed against the imagination gap. Describing their “place restory,” they explain “When it’s on paper and I’ve written it down or said it to people who are now witnessing that pain, it’s like affirmation of hey, we’re here” (PSTI20190502). The importance for

restorying to occur through communal ingroup sharing was echoed equally by others: For Coyote, as they describe, “It forced me to confront it and think about it critically which at the time I did not do...it got me to be honest about emotions” (PSTI20190506), and for Claire, “The fact that I was able to discuss [my stories] in a queer setting with other queer and trans folks...I was like, wow, fuck yeah” (PSTI20190430). Such perspectives are salient to restorying’s three part process (Stornaiuolo & Thomas, 2018), gesturing toward the fact that the cultivation of restorying’s reparative features seems to be enhanced through communally “witnessing the pain” (this point is addressed at length below) (PSTI20190502). A cycle of testimony and witness (Dutro, 2013), restorying is a process that can acutely address affective intensities of painful communal history, for, as Ari astutely points out, “to heal from trauma you have to understand where your trauma comes from” (PSTI20190430). Locating the origins of trauma and then sharing that in spaces of community are a valuable reparative feature of restorying, and it is one that future critical literacy research might explore through counter-critical frameworks.

Restories

Beyond the restorying process, these reparative descriptions also emphasized the positive affective potentials embedded in restories themselves, specifically those of place, mode, metanarrative, and identity. Helen, for instance, found a great sense of freedom in restorying mode (PST20190501). As music was a consistent theme across her restories, mode in particular allowed her to shift how she told her story to reparative effect, one which she experienced over time. Explaining her choice to curate a Spotify playlist in her “mode restory,” she exclaims, “I really liked that one. I got to build it around and

highlight one of the songs that was and still is most impactful for me, and was consistently been one, a song that I have revisited for a year almost” (PST20190501). A story in song, her “mode restory” emphasized the need to consider aurality’s role in multimodal compositions (Brownell & Wargo, 2017; Wargo, 2019), particularly as it relates to affect and repair. Claire also espoused an interest in how her restories became temporally located in her life; Explaining her “metanarrative restory,” a collage of photos challenging “love is love” rhetorics, she describes a photo of footprints in the sand saying, “When I first saw it, I always just thought of death. I was like, oh, because people were killed. Now I think it’s...it’s more” (PST20190430). Isolating a single image, Claire’s transaction with her restory emphasizes readers’ capacities to transform texts, “to build small worlds of sustenance” (Wiegman, 2014, p. 11) that can challenge even the most worn of narratives, for instance #BuryYourGays⁴⁰. For Claire, that photo of death has become something “more,” and while the photo has not changed, her transaction with that text has. Once elicited fear, despondence, and perhaps even resignation, it now offers her potentials for repair; it offers her hope, born of imagining that photo otherwise.

Painful History

As Sara Ahmed (2014) asserts in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, pain is a contingent and social thing, and it is something to which we must bear witness. Ahmed explains, that “through witnessing, I would give [my mother’s] pain a life outside the fragile border of her vulnerable and much-loved body” (p. 30). Likewise, participants in

⁴⁰ #BuryYourGays is a hashtag that references the common historical trope of killing queer characters prior in literature and media. This hashtag is a contemporary social media movement advocating for expanded narrative in which death does not function as the de facto telos for queer representation.

this project bore witness to one another's painful histories, giving it life in word and feeling that exceeded the fragile borders of our own queer existence. For Adam, his painful history and its pain is something he described as "motivation" that he "can use to help others and [him]self" (PST20190501). Reparative, his story has become a motivation for reorganizing his social world. While still painful, the story itself has transformed, becoming a reparative resource that can propel his work as a school counselor. To similar effect, Coyote discusses their painful history asserting, "I feel better about that story; and I feel better about processing it; and I feel better just about like the whole" (PST20190506). Such a statement emphasizes a sense of repair that does not dismiss pain altogether. It speaks to restorying as a process that can reconfigure affective life and, by extension, social relations, doing so through the altering of one's relation to the originary story of their pain. Reworking a painful history, both the process of restorying and restories themselves might usefully be studied as forms of adaptation that foreground different critical relations through storytelling and, more importantly, *restorytelling*.

With all that said, where has this account of reparative description gotten us, particularly as it connects to criticality and alternative modes of reading? Has it helped us to account for power differently, in ways that are relevant to schooling and social justice? I contend that by accounting for the so-called irrational, reparative description promotes an agency that challenges notions of affect as wholly oppressive forces, impinging upon us below the level of consciousness in ways that transform us into unthinking automatons merely carrying out the will of an affective engineer. To that effect, Megan Boler (1999)

in *Feeling Power* names that “within education, as in the wider culture, emotions are a site of social control” (p. xiv). A touchstone of feminist scholarship in education, this work advances a still yet undertheorized reality: that emotions matter and that they affect us and our students in ways to which we and they are often unattuned, though can learn to recognize. While this work powerfully conveys the historical mechanism by which schools have functioned as a cite of emotional control, it does stop short at a pivotal junction for considering power in schools: human agency. Reparative description, I believe, highlights a crucial relationship between affect and agency, for affect is not merely a form of social control, it is a form of power itself—affective power.

Description allows us to attend to this power, specifically, and to its agentic potential. As Marcus, Best, and Love (2016) explain, description as a practice contributes “essential generosity.... when it attends not only to its objects but also to the collective, uncertain, and ongoing activity of trying to get a handle on the world” (p. 4). Description attempts to account for that which is not-yet-known, the uncertain, and what is more uncertain than affect? Wily things, affects are at once individual and collective, felt and pre-conscious, describable and beyond words; affect delimits how “the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished” and is thus vital to counter-critical practices of reading (Spinoza, 1994). Attending to descriptions of affects, of their realization in felt moments, thus attunes us to how power feels and to our limitations in describing how it functions in the world. Situating description as a “reading method” helps us to account for what is present in the texts we read and, in doing so, “reconceive[s] the relation between world and word by shifting from the assumption that describers readily apply words to worlds

to an awareness of just how difficult it can be to do so” (Marcus et al., 2016, p. 10).

Recognizing the partiality and situated nature of our knowledge is part and parcel of descriptive reading and when coupled with a reparative “affective mood,” draws upon the “essential generosity” of description to form an agentive reading of texts and worlds—one that fundamentally transforms both (p. 4).

A form of consciousness raising, both for self and others, coupling repair with description forms a “reading orientation” that promotes agency in how we transact with texts. As demonstrated by the participants above, awareness of affective power can lead to reparative affective responses such as a sense control, motivation, comfort, and acceptance. The descriptions of these moments of repair demonstrate, how one is not merely subject to the whims of affective power, but how one can adopt or even oscillate between reading orientations in agentive ways, fundamentally transforming textual transactions. Readers can create the textual objects that they need and, by adopting different reading orientations, transform transactions to provide sustenance, creating and generating affects that provide for the reader in ways uniquely different from skeptical critique: Readers can harness such power to repair one’s affective life, restorying our imagined worlds saturated with affective histories of fear, love, hope, anger and much, much more. Reading orientations—with reparative description being but one example—provide inroads for restructuring affective responses and for rewriting affective histories, painful histories, that sit in the imagination and shape our experiences of classroom worlds. In gross, affects are constitutive of the imaginaries we live and teach by, and they do exert force in the form of power. We can, however, restory our affective histories and

the power they wield, by adopting differing reading orientations that can fundamentally alter our relationship to the stories we hold: We can locate repair in painful histories.

Irreparable Pain: Feeling Backward to Witness Queer History

While restorying demonstrates a pathway to repair—or so I have argued—repair did not entail a remission of pain. In fact, while many aspects of restorying’s reparative features differed, one facet held constant: the pain of each participant’s painful history remained. Simply put, some pain is beyond repair. It lingers, becoming a part of who we are, of our unfolding narrative, and, most importantly, it informs how we live and act in the present. As Heather Love (2007) explains, “turning away from past degradation to a present or future affirmation means ignoring the past as past; it also makes it harder to see the persistence of the past in the present” (p. 19). For queer educators, our painful histories remain with us, and we both cannot and should not disavow them. Instead, feeling backwards towards histories that hurt reveals the oppressive truths that queerphobia is not something we can merely “get past” but is instead something we must feel toward. We must cultivate new relationships to the past that reveal to us the impact of those affects—pains that are sometimes simply irreparable. In this section, I will first account for the irreparability of some pains, tracing how participants’ experiences of restorying altered relationships to their painful histories without erasing the pain itself. I will then discuss how we address that which is beyond the point of repair: Simply put, we must engage in testimony and witnessing as a community.

A white, neurodivergent lesbian, Helen provides a prime example of pain’s irreparability, having chosen a painful history only weeks removed from the present.

Over the course of the restorying project, Helen narrated a particular hesitancy to restorying, both in terms of reading and writing. For her, this hesitancy was grounded in the story's contingent relation to time. Her painful history was a story only recently transitioned into the past. Interweaving song with expository prose, Helen begins her originary, painful history writing,

*There was a time
I thought that you did everything right
No lies, no wrong*
The Best Thing I Never Had—Beyonce [sic]

In retrospect, I was naïve. I study sex and relationships and I was still taken in by her charm. I didn't even realize the red flags I was overlooking. I fell so hard and I loved her so much. Until the day our relationship ended, I would have told you she was perfect and could do no wrong.

(STY20181001)

Recounting an emotionally abusive relationship, Helen explains that the purpose of her story is to “highlight the journey of [that] relationship (which lasted 8 months and was very painful) and the even more painful aftermath of trying to process the abuse and accept that [she] was actually abused” (STY20181001). For her, this painful history was a story saturated with pain, and as she revealed in our post-interview, “it was an event that had just happened, like just happened. I think that [first] session was two weeks after the event” (PST20190501). Despite expertise in sexuality education, Helen reveals the challenges of growing up without representations in adolescence, a time when one often learns the normative features of healthy or, at the very least, non-abusive relationships. However, such representations are only now coming into existence. Such a story, in my opinion, reveals the impress of homophobia upon adult life, how erasure and narratives of

death in queer representation, transitions the “red flags” of abuse beyond conscious recognition in queer relationships.

While representations of emotional abuse remain underrepresented in queer and non-queer relationships alike—and this should change—the impact thereof within queer affective life proves particularly intensive, likely due to a paucity of representations of healthy queer relationships altogether. For Helen, these realities shaped her restorying process, which she addresses as early as our third session. Speaking with myself and Carlos, she explains,

Helen: I think for like the question of is [restorying] reparative for me, I think at this moment I wouldn't call it that. but also like my story is something that's much more recent than either of your stories. I'm like, this is something that's less than a year ago.

Josh: Right

Helen: Yeah right.so it's like I do think that the work that we're doing is helping me make sense of things and I think that that's laying the groundwork to later do work that is reparative, whether that's with my therapist or my own room.

Josh: Right

Helen: it's somehow in my life, but I could also see how if I was participating in this project with this story five years from now, how it would be reparative in that moment. But even though it doesn't feel like that now, but I do think it's going to have reparative effects. Even if right now, I'm just navigating and making sense...

Josh: Of it. Right.

Helen: Like a process, you know?

(S5A20190325)

For Helen, restorying's reparative potential is not merely mediated by time; it is structured around it. Recalling Sara Ahmed's (2014) assertion of pain's contingent nature. Temporality must be taken into consideration when anyone engages in restorying. Perhaps stories with intensive pain, pain that has not yet been processed due to its freshness or that has yet to be processed psychically, should not be the object of restorying. Recent histories and their affectivity need time to sediment, for the complexity of emotion and affective responses to settle, to become recognizable, known—in gross, for those affects that exceed narrativization to be reconciled, made sense of and, by extension, de-intensified.

While on one hand, processing this event was something that, as Helen explained in her post-interview, she “liked” because she “got to re-write an event that had just happened” (PST20190501), on the other hand, the intensity of the pain by virtue of its recency, meant that the restorying process, in moments, engendered additional pain. It widened wounds that had not yet begun to heal and thus precluded the potential benefits of restorying. For example, responding to the question, “through the course of this project, your relationship to your story, to the pain and that experience, has it changed in any way?” (PST20190501), Helen explains,

It has. I honestly don't know if it's because of the project or not, because I've also done intensive therapy around this for the entire year. For the last year, I've done intensive therapy around all of this. I don't think the project hurt it in any way. I don't know if it did nothing, or if it was helpful. But it wasn't harmful. Revisiting these, as painful as putting together some of this was, I don't think that was harmful necessarily and was taking me back or anything like that. I just am unable to discern if it was helpful, or if that was just therapy is helpful because I cry about this in therapy once a week.

(PST20190501)

For Helen, restorying was a process interwoven with therapy, one that invited her to spend time with her pains, and as she names, “wasn’t harmful.” It was not, however, clearly helpful. These honest explanations provide a necessary caution for restorying. Simply put, restorying is no panacea. As much as we—and particularly I—might want to position restorying as a reparative process for healing the wounds of queerphobia, in particular, and other social oppressions, in general, some stories are simply beyond the point of repair. Accordingly, for those of us living with painful histories, it becomes of paramount importance to learn new relations to our pain, for it will likely never go away, neither through restorying nor through narrative inquiry more broadly, as therapeutic as those processes might be. As Helen’s case demonstrates, pain in its contingency rarely goes away altogether, remaining instead in the body and in memory in ways that necessitate learning to live with pain and its afterlives.

Helen was not, however, the only case in which the pain of painful histories was beyond repair. In fact, in every case, with every participant, restorying did not erase the pain of the past; restorying did, however, consistently change participants’ relation to their pain and to the histories from which their pain emanated. For Carlos for instance, the restorying process allowed him to reorient his relation to the stressors of teaching and of life. Describing a self-help book about stress he said, “A big idea is that you can grow from stress or you can lose years from stress depending on how you look at it” (PST20190430). He then connected this to the restorying process saying, “It’s interesting concurrently thinking about this restorying because it’s restorying that showed me the pain is the same in many ways, but I actually grew from it for the first time. When I never

had grown before and it created like confidence. It wasn't even a story I realized I would ever bring up again." Communing with the past, Carlos describes gaining a sense of control over his story and its pain through restorying; it demonstrated to him that pain, while perhaps undesirable, nonetheless serves a purpose: it allowed him to grow "for the first time." Such a comment gestures towards the recognition that pain is, for many, constitutive of who we are and that knowing our historical relations to pain and the oppressions from which those pains arise is pivotal for growth and for learning to control the painful histories that become constitutive of who we are as educators.

For queer educators, such constitutive histories have long been theorized within queer theory as intimately related to shame, stigma, and the closet (Sedgwick, 1990), and for Coyote, such histories were intertwined with their restorying process and with their pain: "I think that's the queer experience, honestly. Like you learn how to carry bitterness and sweetness in the same mouthful" (PSTI20190506). For them, restorying invited a reencounter; it "forced [them] to confront [their painful history] and think about it critically," and while they explain that their pain has not changed—"I don't know that that's changed to be honest"—they do go on to explain that it allowed them "to be honest about emotions...for the first time." Described as "therapeutic," Coyote then expresses the value of "venting" about their story: "I don't know that this story is precious to me as it once was." Preciousness in this moment was, for them, steeped in embarrassment: "it was an embarrassing story; like I felt like I was being chastised and that like, again, my professionalism was under assault." Their painful history recounted a moment, in which due to their choice to teach a queer YA text to their high school students, their

professionalism was called into question. Restorying, however, altered their affective relationship to that painful history: “It’s no longer something that embarrasses me, at least. I have comfort in how I tell the story.” Echoing Carlos, Coyote also gained a sense of control of their narrative such that the “embarrassment that came out of having to defend [their] curriculum to strangers and have people observe [their] class...melted away.” An altered relation, their story was stripped of embarrassment—a kindred emotion to shame—by seizing control of their own history and grappling with the pain that stuck to it. By confronting and sharing negative emotions, as Coyote explains, “If nothing else, I’m not afraid to talk about this story anymore.”

Communal Testimony and Witness and the Reparative Power of Pain

This process of controlling one’s narratives, those painful histories, surfaced as a theme across participants post-interviews, from Helen, to Carlos, to Coyote, and others, and vital to the cultivation of that control were elements of the restorying project to which I have only thus far gestured: *community*. The need to share one’s painful history with other queer educators surfaced time and again in both regular sessions and post-interviews, and so too the need to have those stories heard. This push and pull of sharing and listen has been described, in literacy studies, as a “circle of testimony and witness” (Dutro, 2013). Anchored in Shoshona Felman’s and Dori Laub’s trauma studies scholarship (1992), the circle of testimony and witness refers to a process in which a “deeply personal response, the response that is embedded in pain” (p. 426) is narrativized, transformed into a testimony that demands, in turn, that someone bear witness to it. As explained by Elizabeth Dutro, witnessing involves the “empathetical

emotional response of expressions—verbal and non-verbal—that acknowledged the weight and importance of the stories told” (p. 427). Such approaches to trauma have been advanced in feminist scholarship as a means to repair experiences of intensive pain that often elude description itself (Ahmed, 2014; Boler, 1999). Voicing the unvoiceable, this process of transforming pain into narrative testimony and then sharing that narrative has—from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee process in South African to singular moments in individual classroom—revealed the reparative dimensions of the circle of testimony and witness, dimensions which have yet to be considered in relation to the literacy practices of queer educators.

Ushering this circle into classrooms of literacy learning, Elizabeth Dutro (2008, 2009, 2011, 2013; Dutro & Kantor, 2011) has created spaces for painful histories and traumas to be addressed in previously unconceivable ways. Specifically, her work has considered the importance of *critical* witnessing and of addressing those visceral, even incomprehensible moments of trauma between students and teachers in classrooms. While my own project has not treated painful histories as trauma narratives—though for many of us they undoubtedly are—this application of testimony and witness neatly encapsulates one of the reparative aspects of restorying. As participants expressed in their post-interviews, sharing their stories was key to repair. Margarita, for instance, describes sharing their final restory, a poem of turmoil that interweaves narratives of love—mother and lover intertwined—saying,

I think because I was asked to share it. It was like otherwise this sits in my head and I think about it a lot. But it's really different when it comes onto paper or when it comes out as an oral story to others. Because then, it becomes much more

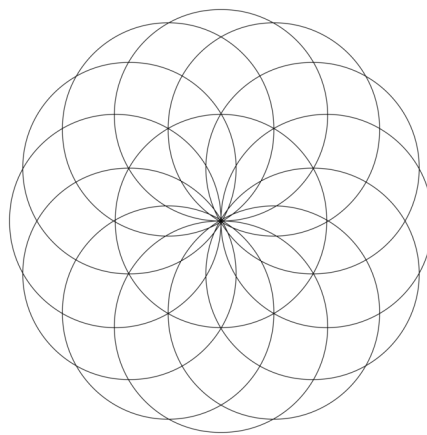
real. It's in my head, and I can question the realness of it. But then, when it's on paper and I've written it down or said it to people who are now witnessing that pain, it's like affirmation of hey, we're here.

(PSTI20190502)

For Margarita, narratives of queer life function uniquely because of their potential for invisibility, their capacity to be unimagined, destoried (for more, see chapter 4). To live a life on the edge of consciousness, both one's own and of others, renders a need to share our stories and our lives more palpable; we feel a need to be recognized. However, when the telling of one's story invites danger, one learns when, where, and with whom to share it. For queer people, to force recognition by fixing interpretation—to preclude that impulse to destory—is to open oneself to harm, physical, emotional, and spiritual. And thus stories of queer life have often gone untold or, at the very least, unheard in public spaces—spaces in which to share our stories safely has only occurred with great intention and often in hidden alcoves and in undercommons (Harney & Moten, 2013), in spaces where the potential for damage is tamped down: this, of course, in no way mitigates intragroup harm told within those, at best, precariously safe spaces (Coleman, 2019b; Leonardo & Porter, 2010).

For Margarita, the invitation to share their story was an invitation to render visible a life otherwise contained within the mind; it was an invitation to share the affective weight of their story, diffusing their pain across a community who, together, might bear it. A rearticulation of Dutro's *circle* of testimony and witness, sharing in this instance was reciprocal and iterative, yet the repair it engendered occurred, not through a single act of telling an individual, but through the diffusion of pain, transformed and held together in

narrative, through community, through a group of queer educators who together could bear witness to Margarita's testimony: *Together* we could bear that pain. As depicted in Figure 6.3, I extend Dutro's metaphor of the circle, conceptualizing it more akin to a concentric series of circles, which by virtue of their interconnectedness allows for pain to be diffused across a community, to be communally witnessed. Such a perspective, I believe, both alleviates and reinforces the responsibility of witnessing, for it is only together that we can hold the weight of painful histories: Together, we must recognize and risk vulnerability; together, we must engage in a *communal circle of testimony and witness*.



(Line Art, n.d.)

Figure 6.3. Communal Circle of Testimony and Witness

Returning to Margarita, it was only through community that the pain of their story was transformed into something “real”; we honored their experience and, in doing so, forged a pathway through which Margarita's relationship to their painful history was

altered. This alteration in turn prompted a continued desire to testify, to extend that story into other spaces and render it visible. Inspired by their experience in our group, Margarita explained that “I shared the poem again at a bonfire a few nights after that, now I’m just sitting with it and holding it which is sometimes that’s all you need. That’s enough validation of like some people are holding it” (PSTI20190502). Margarita’s desire to share their pain communally was not theirs alone. Claire too narrated the value of spending time with other queer educators, “It was a really cool piece to know that we all shared something similar and we might not even know what that is...some people were literally traumatized from that experience [of teaching]” (PST20190430). Likewise, Adam (PSTI20190501), Coyote (PSTI20190506), and Ari (PSTI20190430) all expressed the importance of engaging in a communal witnessing and testimony. Shared, painful histories gained linguistic density; they, in Margarita’s words, become “real,” rising into consciousness such that the story—“sticky” with negative affect—became visible. With our experiences recognized, made recognizable through narrative, we might respond to and forge new relationships with that affective-laden story, such that our connection to the pain of our painful histories might fundamentally change.

Moreover, I propose that this act of communal witness—that recognition of another’s story amongst community—counters the destorying process; it contradicts that deep impulse to forget our pasts, our pains, and our privileges, which, for queer people, is why communal witness proves both so challenging and so crucial. Destorying ourself and our community has, out of oppression and out of survival, become a habitual feature of queer life. Accordingly, to share our stories in community, then, is not merely a process

of being heard; it is a process of being seen, of bearing witness to our very existence. Forging bonds of community that braid into histories, testifying and sharing our stories, through the restorying process, allowed us to become mutually recognized as individuals who together form a community, a community which as Carlos keenly pointed out, has a superpower. Addressing concerns about queer visibility, Carlos in our restorying metanarrative session remarked (RM20190228), “Invisibility is our superpower.” While existence within the margins of consciousness engenders pains, within a social world steep in oppression, destorying also provides a potential for agency; we have the capacity to harness invisibility, to slip between levels of conscious recognition in ways that allow for us to protect queer children, queer adolescent, and queer adults as only we superheroes can.

In a world not yet ready to support many forms of queer life, for those of us willing and able, I want to propose invisibility as a form of agency in the face of destorying, one that reads multiple forms of power in the world and then harnesses it in protection of a community still yet under siege. The politics of “straight passing” are infinitely complicated—particularly when inflected through intersectional identities related to race, gender, ability, and more. To this point, I follow Ed Brockenbrough (2012) in suggesting the closet as a space through which “to pursue various pedagogical agendas, including efforts to act as anti-homophobic change agents, while providing some level of protection in the midst of homophobic surveillance” (p. 761). Focused on the experiences of Black queer male teachers, Brockenbrough’s work, I believe, holds import for many—though perhaps not all—individuals operating under the sign of queer.

His work calls into question gay liberationist narratives and values and spotlights the inherent white supremacist and colonizing impulses of many gay assimilations rhetorics. Further, this work highlights an invaluable inroad—the invisibility of the closet and the erasure of our stories—as a means to combat the continued work of homophobia upon queer students and queer teachers, queer stories and queer lives.

Powerful, pain in this project has revealed itself to be a constitutive element of queer community and queer life, and for the queer educators who participated in this study, to be seen in that pain, to witness and to give testimony together, engendered a reorientation of power, affective power. Irreparable, the pain of homophobia is not easily erased, if such erasure is possible at all; however, our relationship to that pain can be altered. Thinking pain-as-power and, by that, I mean as a force through which “the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished” (Spinoza, 1994) provides a powerful impulse for considering the value of repair. Somewhat ironically, pain forged community; it necessitated the telling and sharing of our stories in that concentric circular pattern of testimony and witness; Reparative, the process of restorying strengthened our affective attachments to each other, to the queer community, and to other queer educators. To be clear, I am not arguing that queer educators need or deserve pain nor am I arguing that forging queer community is only made possible through pain. To the contrary, I am arguing that, in a world that is “always already” pain-full, learning to read that pain, to describe its effects and affects, and then sharing that pain with a community prepared to bear it, can provide a powerful locus for understanding and reorienting affects force—its power critically shaping our lives as educators. Ultimately, to understand that

we are not alone, that our experiences of homophobia in classrooms and in schools continues to resound in the imagination of queer educators provides powerful lines of connection through which we might repair the painful histories we hold, shared across our imagined community in ways that might reshape how we imagine, live, and teach in a queerphobic world. We can restorying our relationship to queerphobic experiences and thereby expand our power to act, our agency as queer educators in classroom spaces and in world that every day continue to erase us.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that literacy studies might embrace counter-critical approaches to reading research as a means of engaging alternative forms of power. While skeptical critique continues to unearth power hidden in the seeming depths of texts or in life, other reading orientations to both word and world can reveal power operating differently, on the surfaces of texts and textuality or even through affective response. Specifically, this chapter has foregrounded reparative description as a reading orientation of particularly salience for this project as it reveals the means by which participants altered their relationships to their painful histories. While restorying did not remove the pain of queerphobia in participants lives, it did, however, alter their relationship to that pain. Reparative, such a move manifested in an increased sense of agency or control over their narratives and, by extension, over the experiences those narratives conveyed. Powerful, to alter one's relationship to pain provides a powerful mechanism for supporting queer educators who continue to inhabit classrooms worlds and other educational systems saturated with queerphobia. Furthermore, communal acts of

testimony and witnessing proved key in the restorying process, particularly for pain that was simply beyond repair. But a beginning, in writing this chapter, I hope to open new pathways for critical literacy, ones that might provide powerful insights into altered forms of critically reading the word and the world in pursuit of representational justice.

CHAPTER 7: A HISTORICAL CONCLUSION WITH IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS, AND A FINAL WORD

This dissertation has been concerned with histories, specifically with the role that queer histories and representational landscapes of the past play in shaping the imaginations of queer educators. Tracing the effects and critical implications of such histories, this project has proffered “doing a queer history for today” as a necessary step in advancing critical literacy scholarship in the direction of representational justice. To underscore that goal, in this chapter, I will recapitulate the primary findings from each of the three findings chapter (4-6), while also connecting them to my conceptualizations of representational justice and “doing a queer history for today.” I will then provide a synthesis of the project, weaving together a story of this dissertation project that illuminates the connective tissue chapter-to-chapter as well as to the larger pursuit of representational justice. I conclude with five recommendations for future scholarship, touching upon implications for research and practice and then share a final word.

Finding Representational Justice: A General Summary of Findings

The representational landscape of queer life is changing. Queer people are, at last, being raised into national consciousness, inscribed in policy, in media, and in educational curricula; however, such consciousness raising is limited in scope. Homonationalism, as advanced by Jasbir Puar (2007) in *Terrorist Assemblages*, provides a useful analytical tool for tracking changes in today’s representational landscape, particularly as it demonstrates which queer lives are being ushered into the US imaginary. **Chapter 4**

“Destorying Queer Life” traces the ways in which queer educators *unimagine* queer life, often unknowingly. This process, referred to as *destorying*, occurs both actively and passively and functions on both the individual and communal level. As illuminated in the discussion of the short story “El Bajío,” destorying on the individual level is hallmarked by the invitation to forget the past, to forget stories of misrepresentation and of absence, and furthermore, to forget our difference—the multiplicity of the queer community—by naturalize those legacies of whiteness and cisnormativity that continue to inform today’s representational landscape. However, we must never forget. To pursue representational justice, we must be aware of the histories that shape us, and for more privileged queers, this entails a recognition of how our imaginations are forged through pasts that are, depending on the case, equally as white or cisgender or able-bodied as they are queer. On the level of community, destorying similarly invites a forgetting of the past, though this time to forget our sameness, doing so through a learned habit of unimagining queer elders, queer communities, and queer histories.

Destorying is one means by which the imagination gap exerts force in the world, and as chapter 4 demonstrates, it is one deeply infused in the meaning making processes of queer individuals. However, we are not powerless before it, for by turning to the past, even to histories that hurt, we might learn new methods of combatting destorying. Informed by history, we might learn oscillatory reading practices rooted in *affective reading*. As I argue, even as we learn to read the word and the world, we must also learn to read our own affectivity, recognize in our wide array of affective responses triggers for shifting our interpretative frames to combat destorying’s invitation to forget. But one of

many, fear is proffered in this chapter as one potential response for challenging destorying's invitation to forget. Essentially, to recognize you are afraid is to recognize that you are afraid of something. I believe we might be healthily afraid of destorying—both our individual differences and communal sameness—in ways that illuminate when we begin to destory queer life. Accordingly, this juxtaposition between national representation and individual erasure is incredibly important for understanding which representations are now defining queer life in US culture. For instance, while LGBTQ+ identification, broadly, has been the primary reason for leveling books bans over the last decade in the US (American Library Association, 2020), in the last five years, these books have been increasingly graphic in nature (i.e., graphic novels, picture books, comics, etc.) and topping the list has been trans or gender nonconforming representation.

This representational landscape need inform today's critical literacy scholarship on, with, and about the queer community, and central to such research should be the role that destorying plays in queer life—that active and passive removal of representation from consciousness. As I demonstrate, destorying fundamentally shapes the meaning-making and literacy practices of queer people; it shapes the stories that we tell and even which story elements occur to us to tell; it is the primary means, by which the imagination gap functions in queer life today. Such realities must be accounted for in scholarship, for imagination gaps are an articulation of power; they are a restricting of imaginative potential, of as one participant explained, imagining oneself “being, getting old” (Helen, S3A20190122). Importantly, destorying is not a phenomenon relegated to the queer imagination. Imagination gaps and how they function must be considered in

any adult who lacked self-representation in childhood, for by understanding the representational landscapes of the imagination, we might advocate for a more just landscape in publishing and in schools. Furthermore, regardless of positionality, educators today grew up in world of limited representational diversity, and while the imagination gap has been theorized in relation to an absence of “mirrors” in childhood, future research might consider the way that privilege grows in the imagination for those who experienced an overabundance of “windows” in the early years of life. Imaginations may develop in childhood, but as adults we can still “reorder” the imagination, restructuring those representational landscapes of childhood in challenge to systemic oppressions such as white supremacy, anti-blackness, ableism, queerphobia, and transphobia, among others.

Chapter 5 extends this work by demonstrating how the imagination gap functions through genre. As Charles Bazerman (1997) explains, “Genres are forms of life, ways of being” (p. 19). More than mere literary conventions, genres are social action, rhetorical situated ways of knowing that instantiates themselves as literary features within texts. Situated within Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), this chapter proposes *genre ghosts* as a concept for tracing the ways in which historical accrued genres shape the imagination. For queer educators, realism is a particularly pressing genre as realist representation of queer life have, within Western literature, traditionally ended in death—a markedly unhappy ending. This pervasive generic norm has in turn shaped the ways in which imaginations form, delimiting what endings occur to queer people and, furthermore, which endings in turn *feel* real. An assessment, this *realist feel*, as I refer to it, proved

challenging for participants, particularly when assessing so-called happy endings in queer literature. As Coyote explained, “For all the lamenting I do that we never get happy endings as queer people, in terms of our media and our content, damn is it hard to write happy queer endings that don't feel fake.” (PSTI20190506). This preclusion of composing happy endings for queer life, I argue, is a feature of living with genres that haunt us—a generic *hauntology*, if you will (Derrida, 2006; Zembylas, 2013).

Such haunting, however, proffers powerful potential for learning from the past’s touch upon the present world, particularly as it informs our happiness today. Helen, for one, found in genre ghosts, specifically in unhappy queer endings, a means to rewrite happiness itself. As Sara Ahmed (2010) demonstrates in *The Promise of Happiness*, for queer people to be perceived as happy in life means appearing to be in alignment with heterosexual norms of happiness—what she calls *happy heterosexuality*. Accordingly, for her, to operate outside these norms entails either remaining unhappy, (i.e., becoming an *unhappy queer*) or rewriting happiness altogether (i.e., finding a queer happiness all our own). Helen opts for both, finding in her “time restory” an emotionally satisfying ending that was, for her, happy, while also positioning her as an unhappy queerness: the story concludes with conversion therapy, shock therapy, and a lobotomy. I argue that such an ending speaks to the potential of recognizing and learning from genre ghosts, both the textual conventions they invite in “artifacts” and their “enactments” in the social world (Dryer, 2016). Such findings point towards the culturally specific ways in which genres animate the social world; for queer people, the realist convention of queer death delimits the potential for re-imagining the boundaries of queer life. However, genres change, and

by expanding the norms of, in this case, happy endings in realist texts, new potentials were realized that drive towards representational justice.

A final thrust of this chapter is to argue for restorying as a speculative process. That is to say, that in the face of realist depictions of queer death, speculating towards otherwise futures and pasts provides a road for bridging the imagination gap. Following the composing process of Carlos, a Mexican American kindergarten teacher, I demonstrate how overtime his exposure to speculative literature and writing results in an increased *critical speculative uptake*. Also couched in RGS, critical speculative uptake refers to the integration of speculation and speculative literary features into one's composing practices. For Carlos, his early restories demonstrate an attention to speculation—to reimagining narrative elements otherwise; however, as the *Restorying Painful Histories* project progresses, his compositions become increasingly works of speculative fiction, including superheroic endings and even a fantasy land based on World of Warcraft. An illustrative case, Carlos demonstrates the potentials of restorying to function as speculative compositional process that bridges the imagination gap. A response to the destroying of chapter 4, this chapter and the next, both provide means of address representational injustices and of attending to the imagination gap in adulthood for queer educators.

Directly addressing critical literacy, **chapter 6** advocates for the integration of counter-critical theory into critical literacy pedagogy and research. Steeped in a criticality born of the Frankfurt school, “critical” has naturalized itself to have limited meaning in literacy research and, therefore, so too has its utility become limited. As explained by

Rita Felski (2015), skeptical critique has naturalized itself as the default “reading style” of critical projects today. This focus is, however, a myopic one, as it limits the potential “moods” and “methods” that critical reading practices might adopt, wedding such practices exclusively to skepticism and critique. There are, however, manifold approaches to reading, and in this chapter, I propose *reading orientations* as a two-part model of counter-critical reading, that operates as one facet of the *affective reading* I advocate in chapter 4. Composed of two primary components, mood and method, this model joins affect and reading methodologies in pursuit of expanding both the forms of power we recognize and the influence or impact of that power in pursuit of representational justice.

While myriad reading orientations might exist—one can combine mood and method in nearly endless combinations to analyze power—in this chapter, I focus on one reading orientation germane to the *Restorying Painful Histories* project, “reparative description.” Drawing from scholarship in queer theory, both repair and description prove uniquely poised to make sense of the ways in which power function through participants restorying processes. Accordingly, following a descriptive account of participants moments of repair, I developed a system of analysis to illuminate how repair functioned for participants and what elements of the restorying process lead to such repair. The top three reparative objects for participants were the “restorying process,” the “restories” themselves, and their original “painful histories.” Importantly, while encounters with these three elements engendered beautiful moments of repair, there was a fundamental

truth for all participants throughout the project: for no one—myself included—did the pain of our painful histories simply go away.

The reality that pain cannot be simply unwritten, necessitate different frameworks for attending to histories that hurt and, furthermore, to pain that is irreparable. Helen, for instance, revealed one limitation of the restorying process, that when wounds are too fresh and the pain is too intense, storytelling—even within a caring community—cannot and should not replace the role of trained counselors. Choosing a painful history that took place just two weeks prior to the first restorying session, Helen espoused throughout the course of the project the difficulty, even impossibility, of teasing apart and rewriting a story too deeply laden with pain. For all participants, in fact, while the pain of our painful history remained, our relationship to that pain changed. Most often, this change was described as gaining a greater sense of control over one's narrative. Finally, building on the work of Elizabeth Dutro (2008, 2009, 2011, 2013), I proposed a *communal circle of testimony and witness* as a vital component of building this sense of narrative control over one's story and one's pain. By sharing our histories in community, we were able to diffuse the pain of our painful histories across a group of individual, and together we could bare it. An imagined community, by reading, writing, responding and imagining together, we were able to restory painful histories of queer life, both our own and our community's in ways that repaired our relationships to the past.

Synthesizing A Story of This Dissertation

Returning to the macro-level arguments of this dissertation—ones that are admittedly aspirational—I will now highlight the connective tissue or threads of thinking

that suture together the wide-ranging elements of this dissertation. I will begin by illuminating how *affective life* (Ben Anderson, 2014) surfaced throughout this dissertation, recognizing that, in the throes of argumentation, I have often neglected throughout this dissertation to demonstrate how the focal emotions and feelings of my findings chapters are, in fact, means of revealing affective life at work. I will then return to my own painful history as a final attempt to *feel backwards* and thus set up my discussion of implications and future directions in the subsequent section.

This dissertation has attended to affective life in myriad ways; however, by focusing on a particular emotions or affective state in each finding chapters (e.g., fear, happiness, and repair), the connection between such affect and life becomes easily lost. My stance, in line with geographer Ben Anderson (2014), holds that affect is suffused within life, so much so that its workings and effects often become overlooked, both in the way that life is lived and in research. Accordingly, to focus on different aspects of affective life—again, fear, happiness, and repair—was not to claim a comprehensive account of affective queer life; it was, instead, an attempt to demonstrate the ways in which affects influences queer educators, specifically in relation to the imagination and, by extension, the larger realm of phenomenology.

Organized around varied aspects of queer *affective life* tied to the imagination gap, the findings chapters of this dissertation speak to one another in a particular sequence. Chapter 4 establishes the problematic itself: what does an imagination gap in queer educators look like? What are its affective contours? And by what mechanisms does it function? Destorying is such vital mechanisms revealed in this chapter, and I

propose affective reading as a means to challenge the impulse to destory, by growing awareness of how affect shapes the imagination and, by extension, our literate lives as we read the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). The first components of chapter 5 extends that problematic into the realm of composition. Born of participant conversations, genres became a salient feature of participants' responses within restorying sessions and revealed further limitations embedded within the queer imagination. Intertwined, imagination and feeling were constrained by an imagination gap in compositional practices, specifically by a history of unhappy queer endings that have shaped queer life in the West, limiting first imaginative and then compositional possibilities.

The latter half of chapter 5 and the entirety of chapter 6 present findings to bridge the imagination gap, both destorying impulses and the limitational structures upon imaginative and compositional practices born of genre. My argument for critical speculative uptake in chapter 5 is a means of feeling backwards, of recognize how queer educators might recognize and learn from ghosts of the past in order to speculate beyond the imagination gap's imposed limitations. Extending this bridging work's critical implications, in chapter 6, I explore the potentials of engaging a wider array or forms of power through counter-critical literacy. Responding to the erasure of affect born of "rationalist" commitments in literacy scholarship (Janks, 2010), this approach to critical literacy scholarship is a call for change, for rethinking both what power is and how we engaging it in hopes of effectively understanding—at least for my research—the imagination and its connection to affective life. Taken together, these findings point

toward the need for expanded critical models, ones that render visible phenomena previously unconsidered. For this dissertation, that phenomena centers around the imagination gap as it shapes the felt worlds of the imagination—worlds illuminated and potentially restructured through encounters with representations of newly crafted pasts, of unseen diversities, and of futures yet-to-be.

The realities of the imagination gap and the need for diverse representation brings me back to my own painful history—one shared, teased apart, reimagined, and restoried in community over the course of an academic year. The process was a laborious and illuminating one that was not without consequence. Feeling backward was about pain as much as it was a pain-filled process; it took, but also gave in return. It is funny to think back across the restorying painful histories project and process in writing this conclusion, for my story is not merely my own any longer. Instead, it is shared; it interwove itself with the stories of my fellow participants—an inquiry community of friends—in a way that has transformed my narrative in the world.

Mirroring my participants, I too think of the narrative control afforded by the restorying process, how it revealed to me power at work in individual acts of storytelling, in the crafting and sharing of my painful history and restories, as well as how it demonstrated to me the imagination's malleability. To restory together was then a means to begin the process of growing aware of and reshaping responses to representations in the world. This project was a special moment for me and, as expressed in their post interviews, for my fellow participants as well. We spent precious time together in community, exploring our sameness and difference, our pride and our pain, in ways that

demonstrate only a small sliver of our community's multiplicitious beauty, and together we attempted to forge a new future for education, one rooted in our own pasts rich with affect, with imagination, and with the vibrancy of queer life.

Implications and Future Directions for Research and Practice

General Educational Research

First and foremost, the *Restorying Painful Histories* project demonstrates the necessity for critical and non-critical scholarship alike to engage with queer life histories and epistemologies. To date, limited research has been conducted with and on the experiences of queer educators; Frankly, we know quite little about the lived experiences of queer individuals and one must ask, "Why?" Queer people have always existed, perhaps not named as such, but alterity of a queer kind has functioned in every social order. We have lived myriad, multiplicitious lives that, as the chapter 2 illustrates, has and continues to exist on the margins of educational scholarship. I cannot help but hope, perhaps vainly, that this dissertation will become a pebble in the water, rippling through educational research. Queer life is tricky, however, because of its relationship to visibility, to closets of both shame and safety; however, the 21st century has opened, at least to some extent, safe passage to learning about and from queer lifeworlds, and these lifeworlds have much to contribute to understanding the workings of power across educational landscapes and the world. Accordingly, to fail to attend to queer life is to fail to pursue educational justice. This must change. Therefore, *my first recommendation for research in the field of education generally is, quite simply, to care about queer life and, to do so, beyond mere lip service.*

Queerness cuts across other planes of social identity; it intersects and informs, and yet common knowledge stands that one can only move so far through the academy doing queer scholarship—this being said perhaps only behind closed doors—and frankly, it is not unwise council. Such realities indicate the need for a reevaluation of the space queer studies occupies within field of education, and we need scholars to make bold choices in their research agendas, to account for queer life and learning, while also attending stringently to the ethics that surround research with any marginalized community. Educational scholarship would be made better by learning from queer experiences, for individuals living nonnormative lives might just illuminate normative assumptions so deeply embedded in US education that their oppressive force remains currently beyond detection. Queer scholarship holds great promise for the entire project of education, for learning and for pedagogy, and it should be valued.

Critical Literacy Scholarship

Critical literacy scholarship has much to attend to in the way of queer life. As this project demonstrates, the meaning-making and literacy practices of queer adults hold much promise for advancing critical literacy work broadly. Destorying, for instance, is a concept that, I believe, might be powerfully considered in relation to non-queer lives as well as to intersections of queer lives that were unaccounted for in this project. Certainly, larger sample sizes could tease out further means through which the imagination gap exerts force in the world, a force born of inequitable representational landscapes encountered in childhood. *My second recommendation thus invites critical literacy scholars to expanding research on the role the imagination gap plays in educators' lives.*

It is likely that most if not all scholars today grew up in a representational landscape defined by whiteness and cisheteronormativity. Our imaginations were shaped around these representations, and we must attend to the ways in which power articulates itself within our imagined worlds. As this dissertation has argued, our imaginations can be rewritten, and the images we hold in the imagination can be “reorder[ed]” (Lennon, 2015). Teachers can bridge gaps in the imagination—those formed through misrepresentation and absence of stories in childhood—by actively seeking out diverse representation today. Young adult literature proves a particularly useful vehicle for engaging the past because it operates as an “open psychic space” for adult anxieties (Kristeva, 1995). I believe that learning and then reconfiguring the imagination by revisiting childhood will drive us towards educational justice—towards that much needed redistribution of resources, opportunity, and access based upon histories of inequity within US education.

Importantly, such a reality speaks to the need for all educations to learn the contours of our imaginations, and this is a process that must be taught. It must be developed and integrated into critical teacher education based upon research grounded in the lived experiences of communities who can respond to one guiding question of this dissertation: What does it mean to grow up without self-representation in childhood? *This leads to my third recommendation that teacher education draw upon critical literacy scholarship to develop processes through which all pre and Inservice educators can learn the contours of their imaginations and its relationship to power.* Building upon this point, while the imagination gap has been used as a concept through which to isolate the

ways in which social worlds have shaped the imaginations of marginalized individuals, from childhood through adulthood, I think this framing might also be flipped to powerful effect. For those educators who saw themselves reflected in the literature and media of their childhood, they did so often at the expense of encountering myriad forms of representational difference. This too forms a gap in the imagination, one that generates particular affective relationships between self and the other—perhaps of fear, anger, shame, or even mistrust. While more research is needed here—and this is certainly one proposed future direction of this research—I do not want to imply that simply by encountering diverse representations in childhood that diversity relations would suddenly be utopian. I do, however, want to suggest that knowing how we feel about others and, more specifically, “the Other” becomes possible if we read affective responses born of the imagination.

Becoming aware of our own affectivity, I believe, might serve as the first step in understanding how power and privilege articulate themselves for many educators, particularly those who are white, straight, cisgender, and able-bodied. Learning which representations cause us comfort or tension or any number of other affective states would reveal to us the representational landscapes of our imagination as well as what happens when that landscape maps onto the material world, generating affective responses. For instance, we might learn how our past shapes who we imagine our students to be in the present, revealing who we ignore, fear, or dislike or those whom we favor. Such overlay, of the imagination onto the material world, spotlights the need for this dissertation research to be transferable. For instance, while destorying and genre ghosts were

conceptualized in relation to queer history and the shifting landscapes of queer representation, I believe that these concepts might be powerfully transferred and reconfigured in light of other legacies of social oppression:

- How might destorying reveal the means by which dehumanization occurs, the process by which readers unravel humanity from stories of marginalized life?
- What genre ghosts haunt the composing practices of other marginalized communities and by revealing those ghosts how might we then speculate and compose otherwise?

Such potential for restorying our worlds gestures towards *my fourth recommendation that critical literacy scholarship incorporate both representational justice and alternative genealogies of affect into its accountings of power*. As proposed in the introduction to this dissertation, representational justice is an equity-oriented, historical-based accounting for the overrepresentation, misrepresentation, and absence of stories. For queer educators, misrepresentation and absences have proven particularly powerful in shaping the imagination. The persistence of these “single stories” (Adichie, 2009), of absence and death, forge a representational landscape in the imagination that reflects those narratives represented and encountered in life. Attending to representational justice, then, invites consideration of how the imagination impacts meaning-making and literacy practices across the lifespan, shaping affective life broadly (Ben Anderson, 2014). The imagination is an affect-laden place that shapes critical reading practices in moments of textual transaction; in this dissertation, reparative description has been proffered as one alternative reading orientation through which power might be engaged

differently, and others should be explored in pursuit of an expanded critical project that strives towards representational justice.

Critical literacy scholarship might additionally expand its impact by exploring the multiple genealogies of affect (Leys, 2011, 2017; Wetherell, 2012). The restriction of affect studies within literacy scholarship, often unknowingly, to the intellectual contributions of Brian Massumi (1995, 2002) throttles the conceptual plurality of the field, as it also erases decades of scholarship by feminist, of color, and queer scholars. We must be open to genealogical plurality (Amin, 2016, 2017; Foucault, 1995), recognizing in histories iterative, overlapping, and discordant nature the potential to engage and learn from history. This point leads to my final recommendation. *My fifth recommendation is that all educators, though especially queer ones, spend time with their painful histories, sharing them, if willing and able, in a communal cycle of testimony and witness.* This project has been one born of my own pain. I have long grappled with a persistent need to make sense of or even process my own painful history—that story recounted in the Chapter 1. Teaching high school English was the hardest thing I have ever done; to enter each day into classrooms demanded more of me than I was ever capable of giving and, ultimately, my own emotional and affective needs were not met: I left.

I believe, however, that things could have been otherwise had I shared my pain, circulated it within a community that together might have helped me to bare it. I needed other queer educators, but our stories were not present in my teacher educator training, our emotions and our histories were not honored in that space. Because of this absence, I

now advocate that all who are willing and able share their painful histories among trusted community. Teaching is a challenging—if not in moments—brutal occupation, and our histories, our stories, are sometimes all we have; they shape how we imagine, inhabit, and feel classroom worlds, and they structure what triggers or sustains us. I believe that critical literacy might make much of this, locating in practices of reading, writing, and meaning-making a means to restory the past as we bridge the imagination gap in adulthood.

A Final Word: Towards Doing a Queer History for Today

As I asserted in my introduction, this dissertation was also an attempt at “doing a queer history of today.” I think that histories, though so easily forgotten, are vital to achieving social justice and realizing queerer futures. Accordingly, despite my advocacy for transferability made in the previous section, I want to follow Carolyn Steedman (1987) in *Landscape for a Good Woman* and conclude my work by “consign[ing] it to the dark” (p. 144). Refusing the cooptation of my story, of my life, and of my history, I look to the conclusion of her autoethnography for guidance; it reads,

I must make the final gesture of defiance, and refuse to let this be absorbed by the central story; must ask for a structure of political thought that will take all of this, all these secret and impossible stories, recognize what has been made out on the margins; and then, recognizing it, refuse to celebrate it; a politics that will, watching this past say “So what?”; and consign it to the dark.

(Steedman, 1987, p. 144)

So much of my work over the last two years has been spent fighting for “So what?,” seeking approval or validation from external funders and organizations and researchers that my story matters, that the stories and histories of the queer community matter. But

“So what?.” I want this to be my final word, because it grounds this work in the fundamental truth that this dissertation will always matter for me and for us: we do matter, and this work is for us, even if only for today.

Doing a queer history of today is, for me, a recognition that our stories are our own. That if no one were to ever to read this tome—one that has extracted so much from me both in time and in tears—that would be okay. I want to leave this project feeling unencumbered by the crushing weight of it, by what it’s supposed to mean and by anticipated readerships (other than my committee). Such a disposition is the only one that will allow me to love this work and not worry, infinitely, about the risks this work takes and, furthermore, the places where it fails to achieve the aims of representational justice. I have to know that queer history can and must be written again tomorrow, and I hope that it will be better than this one today. I acknowledge my responsibility for that work, to revise, to nuance, to listen, and to make changes. The work of queer history will never be done, and that is its beauty, its power, and its potential. To this point, to situate this dissertation, this queer history temporally—for today—creates, for me, a much-needed space to get it wrong; This move is, for me, a recognition, an honoring, and a spotlighting of my own fallibility, and it is, furthermore, a final acknowledge of the standpoint from which I am writing. This work and these interpretations are, from and by me, a white cis gay man who is queer. Such categories provide social legibility in important and powerful ways, yet these identities are invariably limited; they do not encapsulate the whole of who I am, of my desires, or of how I know and experience the world. They do, however, spotlight ways in which my own imagination has been shaped and so too my

interpretative faculties. This work is a queer history for today, and I look forward to it being re-written; I look forward to the threads of whiteness been excised from it (though not forgotten); And I look forward to a continued pursuit of doing queer history for today, one committed to capturing the multiplicity of the community in all its beauty and splendor.

APPENDIX A
Post-Interview Protocol

Guiding Questions:

- What happens when queer educators engaged in a community of practice cultivate restorying practices through acts of sharing, responding to, and (re)composing painful histories together?
 - What meaning making process do queer educators use, both individually and in intra-community, to restory their affective lives?
 - In what ways does encountering representations of queer adolescence shape queer educators restorying practices?
 - How does restorying reshape the imagination and affective life?
-

- 1) How has this experience been for you?
 - a. Are there any moments, in particular, that stick out? Why? Do they have a particularly feeling associated?
- 2) What do you think of restorying?

Walkthrough:

- 3) How did you go about the restorying process?
 - a. Has it been useful? How so?
 - b. Did your understanding of restorying change over time? Did your process change? Were some restories easier than others?
- 4) What YA stories stick out to you and why?
 - a. Did this story influence your restorying in anyway?
 - b. Did these stories influence your imagination at all?

AFTER Walkthrough

- 5) Has this project changed your relationship to your painful history? How so?
 - a. Would you say that this story still hurts? How so? Has that changed at all?
 - b. Has this project been reparative or healing in any way?
- 6) How has this project impacted your understanding of queerness in education?
- 7) If you were to run a project on restorying, what would you change?
- 8) Is there anything you'd like to add?

APPENDIX B

Nvivo Codebook for Restorying Painful Histories Project

Name	F il e s	Refere nces
Affect	2	2
(Un)Forgiveness	1	1
Affective Preparedness	4	5
Anger	1	2
Anxiety	1	1
Attraction	1	1
Belonging	1	1
Boring	1	1
Caring	1	1
Holistic	1	1
Cathartic	1	1
Comfort	7	7
Courageous	1	1
Crying	2	3
Difficulties	2	2
Empathy	1	1
Enjoyment	1	1
Feeling	2	2
Feeling Impasse	1	2
Grief	2	2
Happy	2	2
Healing	4	4
Hope	1	1
Ineffable	1	2
Joy	1	2
Love	9	28
Meditation	1	1
Nostalgia	1	1
Pain	1 0	27
Pride	1	1
Resentment	1	1
Responsibility	4	10
Sadness	3	5

Selfish	1	1
Shame	1	1
Strange	1	1
Surprise	1	1
Body	3	4
Bodies	1	1
Composing	3	4
Audience	2	6
Digital	1	1
Film	2	3
Intertextuality	7	24
Memory	1	1
Mode	1	1
Multimodality	3	7
Music	1	1
Perspective	2	3
Process	1	2
Social Media	3	3
Transferability	1	1
Translanguaging	1	1
Writer Identity	2	2
Destorying	2	5
Destoried	1	1
Destory	1	1
Education	1	1
(Un)Learning	2	2
Apology	1	1
Banking Model	1	1
Bias	1	1
Bosses	1	1
Challenges	1	1
Classroom	1	2
Counseling	1	1
Curriculum Design	1	1

Definition Educator	4	7
Development	2	5
Elitism	1	1
Helpfully Queer	2	3
Higher Education	6	11
Finances	1	1
Invisibility	1	2
Knowledge	1	1
Legislative Protection	1	2
LGBTQ Education	4	7
Life Experiences	1	2
Motivation to Educate	1	1
Organizing	1	1
Payment	1	1
Perceptions	1	1
Performative	1	1
Professional Leaving	1	1
Sex Ed	1	1
Sinful	1	1
Socio-emotional education	3	4
Teacher Education	1	2
Termination	1	1
Emotions	2	3
Emotional Labor	5	11
Emotional Neutrality	1	1
Emotions and Teaching	2	2
Gender	3	4
Gender Nonconforming	1	1

Hair	1	1
Non-Binary	2	2
Trans	6	13
Transphobia	3	3
Genre and Form	9	44
Anthology	1	1
Comedy	1	3
Comics	1	1
Dramatic	1	1
Dystopia	1	1
Fairy Tales	2	6
Fan Fiction	3	6
Feminist	1	3
Form	5	11
Gif	1	1
Happy Endings	6	23
Kill Your Gays	1	1
Love is Love	4	4
Magical Realism	1	1
Poetry	1	3
Queer Endings	3	3
Realism	2	6
Reality	1	1
Speculative	1	1
Superhero	1	2
Tragedy	1	2
History	1	1
HIV AIDS	2	2
Queer History	7	21
Revisionist Queer History	2	6
Identity	2	3
Bisexuality	1	1
Class	1	1
Disability	1	2
First Generation	1	1
Gay Males	1	2

Homelessness	1	1
Indigenous	4	5
Intersectionality	1 2	27
Latinx	1	1
Lesbian	2	2
Veganism	1	1
Imagination	1 0	14
Decolonizing the Imagination	2	2
Erased	1	1
Hermeneutical Resources	1	2
Improvisation	1	1
Limits of Imagination	9	16
Unimagined	7	13
Narrative	1	1
Lifestory	1	1
Medium	1	1
Narrative Structure	1	1
Storytelling	1	1
Testimony Witness	1	1
Nation	3	4
Borders	1	1
Citizenship	1	1
Colonialism	2	5
Governance - State	1	1
Homonationalism	5	8
Homonormative	3	5
Nationalism	1	1
American	1	1
Neoliberalism	3	4

State	1	1
Transnational	1	1
Power	3	7
Authority	1	1
Capitalism	1	1
Labor	1	1
Code Switching	1	1
Coded Language	1	1
Consciousness Raising	2	6
Cops	1	2
Diversity Difference	3	3
Foucault	1	1
Human rights	1	1
Humanity	1	1
Hybridity	2	2
Institution	1	3
Institutional Support	1	1
Natural	1	1
Ontology	1	2
Oppression	2	2
Othered	1	1
Political Correctness	1	1
Political Stance	1	1
Politics	2	2
Privilege	2	2
Self-Policing	2	2
Social Justice	2	4
Subversion	1	1
Trump	1	1
Queer Life	1	1
Advocacy	1	1
Anti-normativity	1	2
Being Out	2	3
Boundaries	1	1
Camp	1	1
Childhood	1	1

Bullying	3	5
Innocence	1	1
Oedipal	1	1
Coming Out	2	4
Community	8	19
Dancing	1	1
Faggot	1	1
Family	5	18
Chosen Family	2	2
Generations	4	7
Heteronormative	2	5
Homophobia	5	17
Marriage	3	3
Mental Health	3	6
Microaggression	1	1
Normativity	1	5
Outed	1	1
Pedophilia	1	1
Proto Queer childhood	3	3
QPOC	1	1
Queer Of Color	1	1
Queer Agency	3	4
Queer Capacity	1	1
Queer Competent	1	1
Queer Death	1	1
Queer Definition	6	12
Terminology	3	3
Queer Identity	3	3
Queer Imaginary	2	2

Queer Mentorship	1	1
Queer Militarization	1	1
Queer Orientation WorldView	1	2
Queer Pedagogy	3	9
Queer Peer Mentorship	1	1
queer pessimism	1	1
Queer Relationality	2	4
Queer Relationships	2	9
Queer Space	2	2
Queer Utopia	1	1
Queer Woman	1	1
Slut Shaming	1	1
Queer Youth	1	1
Queering	1	1
Queerness	2	3
Religion	5	7
Church	1	1
Quaker	1	2
Repression	1	1
Reproductive Futurity	1	1
Safety	1	1
Silence	1	1
Suicide	1	1
The Closet	1	1
Urban	1	1
Therapy	5	11
Two-Spirit	2	2
Visibility Legibility	8	18
Race	3	6
Analogies	1	1

Racism	3	3
White	4	4
Reading	1	2
Banned	1	1
Censorship	1	1
Childhood Reading	1	1
Description	1	1
Escapism	1	1
Exoticization	1	1
Literary Analysis	1	1
OwnVoices	1	3
Phenomenology	1	1
Queer Reading	1	1
Reader Response	2	11
Readicide	1	1
Refreshing	1	1
Reparative	1	75
	0	
Representation	7	10
Sanctioning	1	1
Setting	1	1
Sex Scenes	1	1
Stereotypes	4	5
Transaction	1	1
YA Literature	1	1
Animal	2	3
Queer YA	3	6
Restorying	7	31
Re-stories	1	1
Remarkable Restories	1	1
Restorying Identity	2	3
Restorying Life	1	6
Restorying Metanarrative	2	2

Restorying Mode	1	1
Restorying Perspective	1	1
restorying place	1	1
Restorying Time	1	1
Revisionist History	2	2
Space	3	4
Campus	1	1
Context	1	5
Passing	1	1
Region	7	21
South	2	3
Suburban	1	1
Time	8	17
Future	3	3
Futurity	5	5
Past	1	1
Self	1	1
Trauma	6	7
Abuse	3	4
Worldmaking	2	2
Worlding	1	1

APPENDIX C
Multimodal Content Transcript: Restory 1 (Carlos)



Create your own at Storyboard That

Post-Interview	Evidence	Critical Analysis
<p>C: The comic-book thing, and it wasn't until you asked for the formal data, I guess [inaudible 00:15:01] write it out.</p> <p>J: Ah, that's right. Okay.</p> <p>C: But I did actually like that direction because it was a lot more straight forward for me to do the comic-book</p>	<p>Linguistic: Dialogue takes place entirely in Spanish</p> <p>Color: Whiteness of Avatars; Muted Tones</p>	<p>A departure from his “painful history,” in this restory, Carlos engages power in myriad ways. Most notably, his dialogue takes place entirely in Spanish, when the painful</p>

<p>version, it was easier. It wrote itself, the story wrote itself after that.... Yeah. So that worked out for me, so part of the process wasn't a part of what you asked us, which was to do it in different ways and by doing it in different ways, I always had different ideas.</p> <p>J: And so was your identity piece, you restoried what aspect of identity did you restory in that one, Rafa?</p> <p>C: I don't think I did. Oh okay so that was sort of like one version of the story itself, even. That must have been it.</p> <p>J: Cool. [crosstalk 00:16:14]</p> <p>C: I did re-story I realized I changed my demeanor... Maybe that's I'm thinking what I'm thinking of identity, but it's not the same story, because I basically tell them off... And that might have been the change, that's how I changed it. I don't remember thinking that's my identity, but it could be argued right? Kind of a more-confident version of myself.</p>	<p>Layout: Setting; proximity of characters (remembers limitations of storyboard)</p> <p>Narrative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Sequencing:</i> Final Frame takes place on 51st Floor - <i>Genre:</i> speculation restructures realist account <p>Affect: Intensifiers: “!”; Layout/proximity; Wink & Smiles</p>	<p>history had a single word in Spanish “marica.” Additionally, the affective tone is distinctive; it ends with Carlos’s avatar winking and remaining at his uncle and aunt’s home; he leaves in tears in the original. The narrative sequence has been reconfigured, even if his social identity hasn’t been—Carlos alludes to this in his post-interview. He does however present the idea that because his demeanor, which might be thought of as a representation of his affective state as a restorying/reimagining of his identity.</p> <p><i>How do restories and reimaginings open up new ways of thinking about</i></p>
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		<p><i>social identity and its limits, particularly in relation to social identity and its relation to affect?</i></p> <p>The affective life expressed here is represented differently. He reimagined a “happy ending,” by speculating towards how things might have been otherwise. Additionally, we can see in his description of the project glimmers of imagining otherwise, of speculation. He expresses a bit of confusion</p>
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APPENDIX D
Reparative Description Full Table

	DESCRIPTION OF REPAIR	OBJECT	AFFECT
1	an acceptance of that, this happened	Painful History	Acceptance
2	If you think about it and you actually learn from it, then you can go on and actually do things.	Painful History	Motivation
3	Use it as motivation	Painful History	Motivation
4	that was kind of a good...like kind of giving me hope	Social Progress	Hope
5	maybe things are changing for the better	Social Progress	Hope
6	Things have definitely progressed in a positive way	Social Progress	Hope
7	her priorities are very different than mine	Recognition Perspective	Hope
8	it brings sort of perspective to it, maybe things that I think are so important might not be	Recognition Perspective	Bring Perspective; precludes neg affects
9	it helped me really kind of piece everything together at the end	Restorying Process	Helpfulness
10	There is some purpose to this. There is some helpful outcome	Restorying Process	Helpfulness
11	I can take it and use it and learn from it rather than just not think about it	Painful History	Sense of Purpose
12	Helped me come to terms with the experience and how I can use it to help others and myself	Painful History	Acceptance
13	It was nice to know that I'm not alone in feeling a lot of the different ways	Queer Community	Sense of Community; nice

14	It's just nice to have people who understand	Queer Community	Sense of Community; nice
15	I found the process that we took really helpful.	Restorying process	Helpfulness
16	I shared the poem...now I'm just sitting with it and holding it which is sometimes, that's all you need. That's enough validation of like some people are holding it.	Restory: Place	Community
17	any form of stability, even if its like this, a project that's over time, is really just comforting,	Restorying Process	Comfort
18	the things that we have shared as a group have been, I had no idea other people were feeling this too	Queer Community	Sense of Community
19	I don't know, maybe I'm still healing,"	Restorying Process	Healing
20	It's been like narrative therapy	Restorying Process	Therapy
21	When it's on paper and I've written it down or said it to people who are now witnessing that pain, it's like affirmation of hey, we're here	Restorying Process	Affirmation
22	Honestly, borderline therapeutic	Restorying Process	Therapeutic
23	I think as a writer it's important for me to think about things and the idea of restorying, I think, is significant but again, I guess just as a form of queer healing	Restorying Process	Healing
24	It forced me to confront it and think about it critically which at the time	Restorying Process	Emotionally Honest

	I did not do and I wanted to get past it and I think in that sense it got me to be honest about emotions		
25	There's also catharsis about it	Restorying Process	Catharsis
26	I feel like I got to vent about it for the first time, to be honest	Painful History	Venting
27	I feel better about that story and I feel better about processing it and I feel better just about like the whole	Painful History	Feel Better; trans of obj
28	I have comfort in how I tell the story	Restorying Process: Storytelling of Painful History	Comforting
29	If nothing else, I'm not afraid to talk about this story anymore	Restorying Process	No longer Afraid
30	It was kind of therapeutic to process this over and over again in different ways	Restorying Process	Therapeutic
31	I think it definitely made me feel better	Restorying Process	Feel Better
32	Definitely felt like a more positive response to the story because it was like finding that teenage excitement when you don't	Painful History	Positive Response; trans obje
33	Because I think to heal from trauma you have to understand where your trauma comes from	Restorying Process	Heal
34	I don't have to knit society back together. I can make my own society, or I can just be okay at being outside of it all my life,	Social Progress: Asociality	Contentment

35	Why are we trying to fit in?	Social Progress: Asociality	Sense of Possibility
36	We can create our own sort of underground communities	Imagined Future	Possibility; hope
37	Part of what made it interesting, was it's just so different	Restorying Process (qual research)	Interest
38	I read the first chapter. I was like "Oh my God"	Queer YA	Excitement
39	Part of it is feeling like I'm not alone in my emotions	Queer Community	Community
40	I really liked that one. I got to build it around and highlight one of the songs that was and still is most impactful for me, and was consistently been one, a song that I have revisited for a year almost	Restory: Mode	Enjoyment
41	This one is much more empowering. They're both empowering, but I feel like this one focuses a lot less on the pain	Restory: Metanarrative	Empowerment
42	Both of them end on being stronger	Restory: Metanarrative	Empowerment
43	I liked that one because I got to re-write an event that had just happened	Restory: identity	Liked
44	A lot of pain has been elicited, and it's only been helpful	Restorying Process	Helpfulness
45	It was not the healing that I was expecting	Restorying Process	Healing
46	So good, thinking about pain	Restorying Process	Goodness
47	I do think that was helpful because it gave me control in a way that nothing else has	Restorying Process	Sense of Control

48	Very positive	Restorying Process	Positive
49	Positive in the sense of like meeting other queer people who are very open	Queer Community	Sense of Community
50	Restorying is a very transportable idea that I've been trying to play around with my kids and my families	Restorying Process: Using Restorying	Sense of Potential
51	Restorying is a way to process trauma and so it was cool to bring it to my classroom	Restorying Process: Using Restorying	Cool
52	it's one of the things you do, you remember how you heal, but you don't remember exactly what that's like	Restorying Process; Discussions	Healing
53	Restorying gave me another chance to choose a different way to look at the stress	Restorying Process	Potential
54	I had to like revisualize the past and since I felt like I was there it was almost like a second opportunity to make up for that opportunity and growth	Restorying process	Redemption
55	it was reparative for me	Restorying Process	Reparative
56	it was cool to meet other queer folks who are educators and to hear their stories	Queer Community	Sense of Community; cool
57	the restories that we didn't even know, but to know of all these other possibilities, that was cool	Restorying Process: Sharing Restories	Sense of Possibility
58	This gave me a chance to read for fun but then to also read to try and	Queer YA	"read for fun" and learn difference

	understand something further		
59	When I first saw it, I always just thought of death. I was like, oh, because people were killed. Now I think it's...it's more	Restory: metanarrative, Restorying Process	Sense of potential; obj. transf
60	The potential. The potential, but then also, the dynamics in it is just phenomenal	Restory: Metanarrative	Sense of potential; transf obj
61	Critically thinking about things and so I was like, wow, this is bringing me back	Restorying Process: Queer YA	Sense of possibility; import of critical thinking
62	The fact that I was able to discuss them in a queer setting with other queer and trans folks...I was like, wow, fuck yeah	Restorying Process	Sense of possibility; excitement
63	I think it's awesome. I'm excited knowing that my sister is reading these things. It's just cool	Queer YA	Excitement for Future
64	Everyone should be fucking reading these books	Queer YA	Excitement
65	Reading it, one, it gave me joy	Queer YA	Joy
66	A lot of us are just in constant survival mode...We literally have to keep going and I think this is, this whole thing, has reminded me of , wow, this, us taking this time is so fucking important	Queer Community	Sense of community; Importance
67	I thought that that was cool	Restorying Process: Mode	Cool; potential

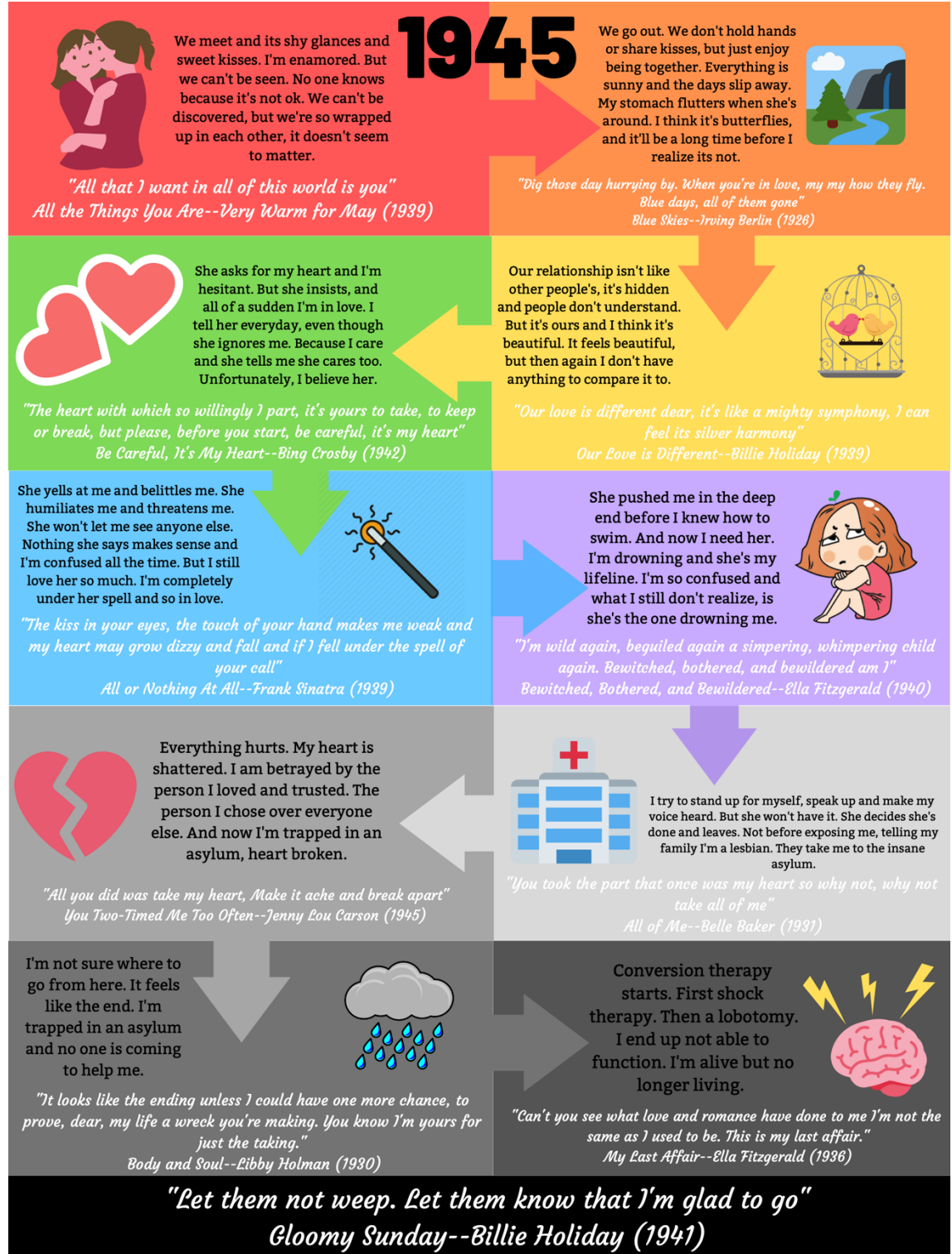
APPENDIX E

Time Restories Mentioned

Adam:



Helen:



Josh:

Restoring Time/History

Restory by: James Joshua Coleman

The Impossible Faggot



"1920s Classroom
Male Teacher
Helping Boy at
Desk - Blackboard
in background"

A Photo of Privilege far too Difficult to Find

Who is this man? Why is he in this picture when so few others are? Was he a teacher? Other pictures are exclusively of white women. Who can exist in history? How do we write stories when the pressure for social erasure are so great?

Reflecting on Privilege



3

Pronged Privilege

- Race
- Gender
- Class

Reflecting on Feelings



- Shock, Frustration, Anger (SFA)
- Frustrated at SFA
- Privilege's Impact: Recognition
- Consignment To Reality
- Longing and Need
- Desire to Reassert and Challenge

The Need to Restory



How can restoring highlight transhistorical relations of privilege?
As well as foreground associated potentials of both agency and erasure in relation to that privilege?

A White Faggot Found

In a moment between wars, with a depression looming, I found myself one again in front of my class, the sole male teachers whose love dare not speak its name. We all dare not speak it, but today I must. Now is the time and this a world of my creation, my classroom. A microcosm of space in which the rules might be reshape and the world remainted. Excuse me everyone. Today I want to share with you elements of my life that has often been obscured. I live with, am supported by, am committed to another educator. Someone who cares as deeply about the world of learning and books as am I. His name is X and we love. We love forcefully, and he will share this space with us from time-to-time."

With little shock and surprise and surprise, my students continued their work, unfazed by changing world around them. For them but a day, for me it was a marker of history, of the imposition of myself in a historical fabricate that had, heretofore, woven me out of time. In this imagined moment, the White faggot could exist, not as an administrator or embedded in some other unwanted position of authority. I could be a teacher, a white teacher, a white middle-class teacher and a faggot, a word of my own choosing and within my control. Not one thrust upon me and to which I could not respond.

Reflection

I am challenged by the details. What should I wear and the students in my 1920s setting. What a shock it was to realize that in pictures white middle class men where largely pushed into positions of authority over the primarily white female teaching force. In this moment, I realized the pull of privilege, to push me into ranks of authority unwarranted and potentially unwanted. How privilege can exert a powerful force that propels bodies even against their own volition. I further recognize whiteness as a fundament for this existence, merely 55 years from the emancipation proclamation; Black teachers as a formal part of the national work teacher work force must have been few and far between, thus race becomes a condition of possibility for existence. So too is sexuality and cisgenderness, all though these operate in more tacit ways, summoning the reality of passing, its potential, and the need to consider analogous and comparative conception of sexuality and gender to race. Who too could afford such learning-the upper or middle class, Christians, etc.

To write this restory thus became quite difficult. My desire to be "historical accurate" stymied my capacity to write and conceptualize the world. My perceived realities of the time impinging on my minds capacity to create, to imagine, to write the world otherwise, in which I as a queer white man might exist. I also found myself disappointed with the narrative I crafted. I fell into a "coming out" story. I needed to reveal my sexuality, through an imagined partner- whom I found myself unwilling to name. Why did I turn to that story- a well-worn one. Why couldn't my mind hold at bay the challenges of restoring history/time, the need to be factual. And lastly, how does this work show an impulse toward homonationalism and how might it stem that impulse.



An exceptional form of national heteronormativity is not joined by an exceptional form of national homonormativity, in other words, homonationalism.

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